

Dr M: Venture imaginative

By AHIRUDIN ATTAN

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has described the luxury express rail service involving Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore as a "very imaginative" venture.

"I was told about the project right from the start and have been watching its progress. I'm very happy that the various parties are making the idea work," he said at the signing ceremony among the companies representing the three Asean neighbours and the UK-based Orient Express Hotels Inc, the fourth partner in the venture, in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the

Eastern & Oriental (O & E) Express, as the luxury service is to be called, falls in line with the spirit of Malaysia Inc.

In his impromptu address, the Prime Minister recounted his younger days when he used to make weekend trips between Alor Star, where he had a medical practice, and Kuala Lumpur.

"I've always liked to travel in trains. The train service in Malaysia is slow, but I wasn't in any hurry during those days. I think people are going to enjoy the leisurely ride on this luxury express," he said.

He approved of the O & E Express' idea of using romance/adven-

ture as the theme to promote its services. "It should be good for those with heart problems — both in the case of the young as well as the old."

On a more serious note, the Prime Minister told the joint venture to be service-oriented and to introduce on board the coaches satay, tom yam, or other food and general items which are representative of the three Asean neighbours involved in the venture.

The luxury express is scheduled to make its maiden Bangkok-Kuala Lumpur-Singapore journey in August next year in conjunction with the Visit Asean Year.