

Dr M: Don't reject foreign expertise

By M. Veera Pandiyan and
Loh Jy Shen

MALACCA, Wed. — The people should not be nationalistic to the point of rejecting foreigners who can help develop the country, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said Malaysians should use the skills of foreigners while waiting to acquire expertise and experience.

Dr Mahathir said many hotels in the country, for example, were now managed by foreigners because there were insufficient local professionals.

"We should not be saying, 'We don't want foreigners, we can do everything on our own.' We will only end up losing in the end," he said when opening the Tapa-Nyai Pulau Besar Island Resort near here.

"Who knows when we reach the stage where we have more knowledge and expertise, others may learn from us," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's tourism industry had grown tremendously over the past few years and the success could be seen from the high hotel occupancy rates.

He said unlike in other countries, the inflow of tourists into the country did not slow down during the

height of the Gulf War.

Dr Mahathir urged hoteliers and others in the industry to aggressively promote their destinations.

"We should not adopt a lackadaisical attitude and expect tourists to come on their own," he added.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Rahim Tamby Chik said the state government would postpone its proposed project to reclaim land around Pulau Besar pending a study to identify sunken wrecks around the islands.

He said the wrecks, including many reputedly holding treasures, were believed to be lying on the seabed near the island.