

# PM: Tourism industry still has big potential

By Vijayan Menon

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — The tourism industry in Malaysia still has tremendous potential to develop rapidly, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

He said that while tourism was the primary sector in the economy of some countries, it was only the third largest foreign exchange earner in Malaysia.

"The number of people involved in this industry is still small. Apart from certain scenic spots which are frequented by tourists during school holidays, there are many other attractive places which are yet to be popularised.

"Since tourism can play a pivotal role in boosting national income and upgrading the living standards of the people, the Government will continue to encourage the development of the industry," he said when launching the 1994 Visit Malaysia Year publicity campaign at the Putra World

Trade Centre.

He said that following the positive result of Visit Malaysia Year 1990, the Government decided to launch a similar programme for 1994 to ensure continued success in coming years.

Dr Mahathir said Visit Malaysia Year 1990 had helped to improve the quality of culture and arts which had begun to have a greater following.

"The tourism industry has helped to develop Malaysian culture and arts and today they no longer are mere subjects for research."

Dr Mahathir said domestic tourism should become the basis of the industry's growth.

"This will prevent any negative effects on the industry when there is a drop in arrival of foreign tourists due to war or global economic slump."

He said in developing the industry, emphasis should be given to promoting domestic tourism by providing facilities which were within reach of the ordinary people.

"While foreign tourists are normally from the high income group, local visitors comprise all sections of society."

Dr Mahathir said careful planning should be made to prevent any adverse effect on the environment whenever tourism projects were implemented.

"Entrepreneurs involved in tourism should be aware that foreign tourists come to Malaysia to enjoy its scenic and natural attractions which are no longer available in their own countries.

"If the environment and natural surroundings are destroyed, then foreign tourists will not come to our country."

He urged those involved in the industry and the people to treat tourists well at all times and never fleece them.

"What is important is to ensure the long term health of the industry. Attempting to make a fast buck at the expense of the tourist is not only being short-sighted but will hurt the industry as a whole."