

# Dr M: Get to know country better and

NST - 1 SEP 1993

By James Ritchie

SANTUBONG (Kuching Division), Tues. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has called on Malaysians — in the peninsula and Sabah and Sarawak — to visit each other more often to promote domestic tourism.

Speaking at the opening of the Santubong Resort at the Damai Peninsula here, 32km from Kuching, he said that there was a need for Malaysians to get to know the country.

He encouraged hoteliers to build more three-star ho-

tels as this would ensure the development of domestic tourism, adding that if more Malaysians spent their money at home it would contribute to domestic economic growth.

The Prime Minister also told hoteliers that although hotels paid 30 per cent in terms of corporate tax to the Government, it had also contributed tremendously to tourism and had spent RM300 million over the past two years and would spend another RM100 million this year.

He said hotels should ensure that they provide the

best service and being polite to guests was an inherent Malaysian trait.

"But while the staff should provide good service, it does not mean servile service," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that if the tourism industry prospered, all Malaysians would enjoy this prosperity.

On the promotion of international tourism, the Prime Minister said that Malaysia and other Asean countries should focus their attention on this industry and attract the big spenders like the United States, Japan and European countries.

He said that if Malaysia continued to have reasonably cheaper room charges but with five-star service, more foreign tourists would visit the country.

Dr Mahathir also praised Datuk Ting Pek Kheing who in a period of two years had built five international hotels in the country.

The RM115 million 450-room Santubong Resort was built by Ting in 1,409 days and in jest Dr Mahathir said that the developer was building hotels so fast that every four months he was invited to officiate yet another creation.

## promote tourism with more visits

Dr Mahathir said Ting was also carrying out projects in Iran while there were two other hotel projects in Vietnam and Hainan.

Ting is also responsible for building a brand new exhibition hall for the Lima 1993 exhibition in Langkawi.

Dr Mahathir said that the project, to be sited on a 2.2 hectare piece of land, will be completed next month.

Ting said that his fascination with hotel building started in 1991 when the Prime Minister posed a big

challenge by asking him to build a hotel in Langkawi to accommodate visitors to the Lima exhibition.

He completed the 300-room hotel in 53 days.

Apart from the top class facilities, the Santubong Resort has a massive and impressive banquet hall measuring 100 metres long which can cater to a seminar for 2,000 people.

This is the largest banquet hall in Sarawak.

Ting has started building a 300-room budget hotel at Tanjung Manis resort at the Rajang delta in the Sibu di-

vision. The RM20 million hotel which will have an 18-hole golf course costing RM20 million will be completed within six months.

Ting started building hotels in August 1991.

His first hotel was the 300-room Delima resort in Langkawi. He built the 1,200-room Mega Budget Hotel in Langkawi in six months, 300-room Sheraton Langkawi in 100 days and the 272-room Sheraton Manikar Resort, Labuan in six months.

Earlier, Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud said that a Sarawak tourism master plan had

been completed and would be handed to the Federal Government for its perusal and suggestions.

Once the master plan was approved, Taib hoped to see the pace of the tourism industry hastened.

He said that since the Prime Ministers' drive to promote tourism as an industry in the 1980s, Sarawak's tourism industry had picked up and Damai Peninsula alone has 1,000 rooms.

Taib said that this was timely as Sarawak could now receive more tourists in keeping with the objectives of Visit Malaysia Year 1994.