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Mahathir-Railway

KTM PLAYS IMPORTANT ROLE IN MALAYSIA'S INDUSTRIALISATION PROGRAMMES

(EMBARGO: For release after 10pm today Sept.19)

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept.19 (Bernama) -- Keretapi Tanah Melayu Bhd. (KTM) will play an increasingly important role in Malaysia's industrialisation and growth towards the year 2020, (Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight.

The government encouraged KTM to modernise and even to build new lines that would help open up the country, he added when launching the inaugural run of the Eastern and Oriental (E&O) Express luxury train here.

The Prime Minister said trains had always been an efficient and economic means of transport in the world.

Although in some countries the train service had been allowed to decay, in Malaysia the railway system had been maintained and was making a very strong come back and contribution to national development, he added.

Dr Mahathir said the E & O Express was a very special and beautiful train and it complemented Malaysia's modernisation programme as well as represented all the most excellent qualities of rail transport at its very best and most romantic, -- more

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Mahathir-Railway 2 Kuala Lumpur (EMBARGO)

The train has been described as a luxury hotel on wheels and fitted in well with up-market tourism, he added.

Malaysians, he said, were blessed with a beautiful country with mountains, lakes and pristine islands populated by friendly people living together in harmony.

He added: "We intend to conserve these natural assets while promoting tourism.

"We believe that these natural assets should be enjoyed by as many people as possible.

"It is therefore our intention to preserve our natural assets at all cost."

The Prime Minister said during Visit Malaysia Year 1990, Malaysia succeeded in doubling the number of visitors to the country and he hoped that the E & O Express would help to double once again the number of people visiting the country during Visit Malaysia Year (VMY) 1994.

A long list of events and festivals have been planned for VMY '94 and a visit to the country during VMY '94 would be very interesting and worthwhile, he added. -- more

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Dr Mahathir said the E & O Express represented the collaborative efforts between many people. Its route stretched from Singapore, through Malaysia and into Thailand, symbolising a bold and imaginative statement of Asean cooperation, transcending not only political but also cultural, economic and ideological boundaries and bringing together the peoples of the three Southeast Asian nations.

He hoped more tourists would be encouraged to travel to Southeast Asia, thus complementing and possibly increasing passenger air traffic to the respective countries.

"This is the kind of value-added project that the government welcomes whole-heartedly. It is totally in keeping with the policy of letting the private sector play the major role in the economy while the government concentrates on administration and policy making," he said.

The RM50 million (US\$20 million) E & O Express is owned and operated by the Bermuda-based Malay-Siam Royal Mail (MSRM) and managed by Venice-Simplon-Orient Express (VSOE) Ltd.

The service, reminiscent of the "Orient Express" in Europe, is expected to attract 18,000 tourists to Malaysia annually. -- Bernama

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