

East Coast should be ready for tourism industries

KIJAL (Kemaman), Tues. — East Coast States, especially Terengganu, must be ready for an influx of industries in the tourism sector soon, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the natural attractions in the East Coast were many and, soon, it would be exploited by investors involved with the tourism industry.

He added that this would also provide jobs and businesses for the locals.

"We expect more industries to be located here because rapid development in the West Coast had caused a shortage of labour.

"This will be one of the main reasons for the shift to the East Coast.

"Moreover, the East Coast is blessed with nearly 600km of beautiful, clean beaches, and islands that have the potential to be developed into international-class resorts," he said.

Speaking at the groundbreaking for the Kijal Beach Resort Township at Bris Meraga here, Mahathir said that with the expected influx of investors, the administrators in the East Coast States must be prepared to accept "outside expertise" in the tourism sector.

"The people in the East Coast must accept the entry of these outsiders in their fold. These are people who have the money and experience in the tourism industry, and they will be here to help develop the industry," he added.

The Kijal Beach Resort Township was one example of how a company, Resorts World Bhd — an experienced hospitality and recreation organisation — could develop the tourism industry through a joint-venture with the Terengganu State Government.

The project, which covers about 224 hectares and has a 3.5km beach front from Kuala Kijal to Kuala Kemasik, cost about RM350 million.

It will be developed over 10 years.

The facilities include a five-star hotel, chalets, an 18-hole golf course, recreation and theme parks, and water sports facilities.

Mahathir said that, while profits would be the objective of any tourism projects, the developers must plan the projects carefully so that the natural surroundings would not be disturbed.

He added that although ambitious tourism projects were meant to attract the big spenders and international tourists, the residents too could benefit by setting up businesses selling native products and local food, as well as accommodation.

He said the spinoff from such major projects could be felt by everyone, and it would also benefit the country in terms of attracting foreign exchange.