

# Dr M: Work together in tourism development

KOTA KINABALU, Sat. — The Government and the private sector should work together in identifying areas which could be developed into tourist attractions, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the Government was always ready to extend its co-operation in national economic development.

"Apart from providing sound investment climate, the Government will determine that adequate infrastructure is available to assist the private sector," he added when launching the Sutera Harbour Resort here today.

The RM1 billion project, developed by Singapore-based OCK Group of Companies, involves the construction of three hotels, 150 luxury bungalows, 500 condominiums, a yacht club and three nine-hole golf courses designed by golf great Graham Marsh.

It is being built on 155ha of reclaimed land and is expected to be fully completed in five years.

Dr Mahathir said the project was timely considering that Sabah was lagging behind the other States in terms of tourism development.

"I believe the developer of

the project has made a wise choice in locating the project in Kota Kinabalu.

"This is because Kota Kinabalu has one of the busiest airports and its harbour is on par with Port Klang and Penang in terms of ship arrivals," he added.

Dr Mahathir described the beaches in South East Asia, including those in Sabah, as among the most beautiful in the world and the area is rich in marine resources like coral reefs, mangrove forests and fishes.

"Therefore, it is no surprise that there have been some weaknesses among the various sectors about the best way to develop these resources," he added.

He, however, cautioned that the development of these areas should take into account their capacity to absorb such development.

"Basically, we have to ensure that the development also considers environmental interests.

"Natural resources should be developed wisely so that they could become choice attractions to tourists and nature-lovers.

"I believe with prudent development management and co-operation among all sides, we can turn Sabah into a popular tourist destination. The right approach

will enable us to carry out tourism development without destroying our culture, but benefit the country and local populace," he said.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Sakaran Dandai said Sabah would welcome foreign investors who could guarantee the transfer of technology to local entrepreneurs.

He said this was necessary to ensure that the State's resources benefited both sides.

"There must be genuine co-operation between the foreign investors and the local entrepreneurs to ensure mutual benefit," he said at the launching of resort.

He said although the State Barisan Nasional Government was only four months old, it had been able to efficiently implement development projects despite the many obstacles.

Sakaran said almost all the political parties in Sabah were now in the BN and it could be considered a success for the national coalition.

"I hope such co-operation will continue for the benefit of the people and the State."

Although certain quarters had expressed dissatisfaction over several issues, Sakaran said it must be stressed that all actions by the Government were in good faith.