

PM: Private sector must tap tourism potential

By S. Jayakrishnan

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight urged the private sector to work together with the Government to tap the country's tourism potential which has yet to be fully exploited.

He said they should adopt a more innovative approach in providing services for tourists to make Malaysia a tourist destination and expand further the opportunities for the growth of the industry in the country.

"The hotel industry, particularly in the urban areas, has rapidly developed and this will be able to meet the accommodation needs of tourists from abroad as well as those locally.

"Although the industry has rapidly developed, its potential has not yet been fully exploited," he said

when opening The Legend Hotel in Jalan Putra here.

The Legend Hotel and Apartments were built at a cost of RM220 million. They comprise 447 rooms and 213 service apartments with the most modern and sophisticated services and amenities.

Dr Mahathir said the growth of the tourism sector was closely linked to greater employment opportunities, income, valued-added services and the establishment of a strong network with other economic sectors.

"As such, any effort by the private sector which will encourage the country's tourism industry will be welcomed by the Government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the tourism sector was the third most important support industry after manufacturing and petroleum exploration.

He added that it also

helped reduce the big deficit in invisible trade.

Dr Mahathir said from 1980 to July this year a total of 320 hotel projects involving an investment of RM11,183 million had been approved.

Of this, a total of RM8,471 million or 76 per cent comprised local investment, while foreign investment accounted for only 24 per cent or RM2,713 million.

In 1993 alone, a total of RM1,899 million was invested in hotel projects, representing a growth of 164 per cent over the RM718 million invested in 1992.

"The number of hotel projects approved has also increased from 14 projects in 1992 to 57 projects in 1993.

"In the first seven months of this year, a total of 19 hotel projects were approved, involving an investment capital estimated at RM211 million."

Dr Mahathir said the Government was proud that Metroplex Bhd (the owners of The Legend Hotel) had shown a caring and proactive attitude towards the Government's efforts in developing the tourism sector.

He said the location of The Legend Hotel in a complex having a hotel, service apartments, shopping complex, office space and recreation areas was a sensible concept which would attract more tourists and shoppers to the city.

He said by providing features that were avant-garde in terms of style, design and quality in the luxury hotel complex concept, this marked a new chapter in the hotel sector of The Legend Hotel and Resorts chain.

A charity jade auction was also held in conjunction with the event and a total of RM1,056,000 was collected. The proceeds went to Bakti.