

PM: More lakeside resorts to be developed

By Saiful Azhar Abdullah

ALOR STAR, Sun. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the Government would develop more lakeside resorts and promote them as the country's new tourist attraction.

He was confident that the development of lakes into tourism spots would be more active in the coming years.

"We were unable to develop the lakes in those days because most of them were located in areas under communist threats.

"Now these areas are no longer protected areas. That is why we have started developing the lakes. God willing, we hope to have a fantasy lake," Dr Mahathir said after a brief visit to Holiday Inn Resort Pedu Lake in Pedu, about 90km from here.

The RM60 million Holiday Inn Resort Pedu Lake was opened to tourists on Dec 22, last year.

Accompanying the Prime Minister on his visit were State Entrepreneurship and Tourism Committee chairman Datuk Syed Razak Syed Zain Barakbah and Pemas OUE Sdn Bhd general manager Hashimuddin Abdul Kadir.

Relating his experience on the amphibious aircraft, Dr Mahathir said: "It was a surprisingly smooth landing, in fact it was smoother than landing on land... this was my first experience in a float plane.

"I have flown in amphibious aircraft but this was my first flight on a land plane fitted with floats. It was a surprisingly nice ride ... it was quite fast compared to a helicopter," he said, adding this was the beginning of a new trend in Malaysia.

Dr Mahathir said more hotels would be built at lake sites including disused mines, man-made lakes and dams which were built for water and hydro-electricity supplies.

"These lakes which are normally situated above sea level are scenic and picturesque.

"The amphibious aircraft service will be a new experience for domestic and foreign tourists," he added.

Asked whether more hotels would be built in Pedu, Dr Mahathir said accommodation facilities for budget and local tourists would be built.

"The Malaysian Promotion and Tourism Board (MPTB) and the State Government will build the accommodation facilities."

On the amphibious aircraft service, Dr Mahathir said it would be jointly operated by Mofaz Air and Country Heights Berhad.

"They will also provide the service to other lakes such as Kenyir in Terengganu, Banding in Temenggor, Perak and others," he added.

Asked whether the service would be introduced in Langkawi, Dr Mahathir said the island has sufficient land-based planes.