

# Theme park addition to island's attractions

LANGKAWI, Mon. — Visitors to the island will find an added man-made attraction with the opening of Aquabeat, a water theme park, at Kuala Muda by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight.

The RM40 million joint-venture project by Ekran Berhad of Tan Sri Ting Pek Khing and Langkawi Development Authority can be used even during rainy days as it is the nation's first indoor water theme park.

In officiating the project, Dr Mahathir spoke of the growing stature of the island as an international resort with various tourism facilities, besides the natural attractions.

It is a far cry from the old days when land was practically free or very cheap.

"But now we have more than 7,000 rooms with 1.6 million visitors last year, of which 600,000 were foreigners. Ten years ago there were only a few hundred rooms and they were not even three-star rating," he said.

He said the island's rapid growth was not just due to the duty free status accorded in 1987 as prices of some goods were even higher than on the mainland.

Dr Mahathir attributed the rapid growth in tourism to the natural attractions of the island.

"Once these attractions became known there was a surge in tourist arrivals," he said, adding that now there are also man-made attractions in reference to the Aquabeat.

The Aquabeat is part of a five-year Langkasuka Port Marina Project which includes French Riviera-style bungalows and homes with berths for pleasure craft.

Somewhat similar to the Sunway Lagoon in Subang, Selangor, the Aquabeat boasts of endless spills and thrills for the whole family.

Among the fun-facilities are running river slide, body slide, wave pool, splashdown pool, jacuzzi and aquadeck.