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Mahathir-Tourism

BE BOLD IN MAKING INVESTMENT IN TOURISM, SAYS PM

LANGKAWI, July 29 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the private sector should not be apprehensive about making major investments in the local tourism industry as it has bright potential.

Furthermore, businessmen should be prepared to take risk in their investments, he said.

"We need to invest plenty of money if we wish to progress because small investments usually only bring failure," he said.

"At the same time we should be prepared to face risks and it is here that capital strength becomes the most important factor before any success sets in," he said when opening the Hotel Sheraton Perdana in Kuah here.

Citing the hotel as an example, Dr Mahathir said the willingness of Renong Berhad, through its subsidiary Faber Berhad, to invest millions of ringgit to revive the hotel should be emulated.

Dr Mahathir said the hotel had been built with questionable intent as the Langkawi Island Resort.

"Their aim in building this hotel was to serve as a platform for getting another facility elsewhere, that is a gambling licence.

"But when they did not get what they desired, their interest in the hotel waned and it was eventually bought over by the government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that after some time the ownership changed hands and it was finally taken over by Renong Berhad which confidently invested RM120 million to give it a new look.

"Now it has turned into a five-star hotel and this is the kind of confidence that we want," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the local tourism industry could expand more rapidly if the available resources were fully utilised.

Many of the country's assets like rivers, mountains, lakes and former mining areas had not been fully exploited yet, he said.

Dr Mahathir said, however, this did not mean that hills can be flattened and padi fields developed indiscriminately.

"Developing the industry does not mean that we can fell all trees and flatten the hills because these are actually the tourist attractions," he said.

Dr Mahathir said cleanliness should also be given priority to attract the tourists.

In his speech, Faber Berhad chairman Abdullah Mohamad Yusof said the company planned to increase its investments by fully utilising the land at the hotel site.

Only 22 hectares of the estimated 30 hectares belonging to the 204-room hotel fronting the Langkawi Bay had been used, he said.

The Prime Minister, accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamad Ali, later attended a musical performance by the Bolshoi Ballet Theatre from Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

Dr Mahathir was obviously impressed with the hour-long presentation, which included the works of the late Tan Sri P. Ramalee like "Di Manakan Ku Cari Ganti" and "Getaran Jiwa", and gave the performers a standing ovation on three occasions.

The Prime Minister received a pair of traditional Uzbekistan clothes as a gift while Dr Siti Hasmah got a shawl. -- BERNAMA

ZAA YBY

