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Dr M: Understand importance of tourism

KUALA TERENGGANU, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysians should understand the importance of tourism in order to appreciate its contribution to the country's economy.

He said the tourism industry was a sector which brought a lot of benefits to the country.

He added that it was important for the people to understand that the tourism industry had helped provide job opportunities to the local population, especially those working at hotels, tour agencies and handicraft manufacturers.

"Foreign tourists spend a lot of money and they stay in hotels, shop and in many other ways benefit the people, whose income will increase, as well as contribute to the country's revenue.

"This will enable us to move a step forward towards becoming a more progressive nation. To achieve that, the people have to understand the importance of tourism," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who was accompanied by his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, was launching the Visit Terengganu Year 1997 at the Sultan Ismail Nasiruddin Shah.

Menteri Besar Tan Sri Wan Mokhtar Ahmad and State Executive Councillors were also present.

Dr Mahathir said the people should make tourists feel welcome as if they were their customers in their own restaurants because by treating them well, they would return.

"Otherwise, their business will be affected. Tourists who do not get good treatment will not come again and they may even tell their friends that it will not be worthwhile to visit Malaysia or Terengganu."

He said those involved directly (in the tourism sector) such as hotel employees, taxi drivers, bus and boat operators as well as government employees should give good service to tourists.

"If we are tourists, we, too, expect good service or treatment. This is the same with those who come to our country. Therefore, if we want good treatment, we should not give bad treatment," he said.

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysia was a beautiful country and as such, Malaysians should present the nation as a beautiful country and maintain cleanliness at all times.

"In the east coast, we have 800km of beach. This is an asset that could attract tourists. If we don't keep it clean, it will not become a good asset."

Similarly, he said the lakes, waterfalls and hot springs must be kept clean so that they would remain attractive.

"It is like having a gold nugget and throwing it to a bird. It's a waste. But by turning the nugget into jewellery, we can use it and this will show that we are aware of the value of things that we own," he added.

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