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Sports-Golf (Dr Mahathir)

MALAYSIA TO DEVELOP GOLF-RELATED TOURISM- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 17 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight the government is keen to develop golf-related tourism as part of its policy of expanding the tourist sector since it is one of the most important contributors to foreign exchange earnings.

He said tourists were greatly attracted to the beautifully-landscaped-greenery of the golf courses and the holiday resorts which were usually developed together in Malaysia.

"Golfers and tourists can find both accommodation and golfing facilities in an attractive surrounding and will be able to savour the culinary and cultural heritage of Malaysia," he said when opening the World Cup Golf Malaysia '99 (WCG Malaysia '99) at the Palace of the Golden Horses at the Mines Resort City, here.

Sixty-four golfers from 32 countries are taking part in the four-day competition.

The players include world number one Tiger Woods of the United States.

Dr Mahathir quipped: "Malaysia is currently a very inexpensive destination for tourists, thanks to the devaluation of the Malaysian currency."

The Prime Minister praised the organising committee of the WCG Malaysia '99 for adopting a special theme "Go For The Green".

"It is most befitting the greenery of Malaysian tropical rainforest and the importance of environment preservation."

The theme was most consistent with sustainable development, a principle which Malaysia has always adhered to, he added.

Dr Mahathir hoped the tourists who were here for the tournament would take time off to see the rest of Malaysia and its cultural diversity and at the same time experience Malaysian hospitality.

"I'm not a golfer but I do encourage golfing because I like the green of the golf courses, I hope everyone including Mr Tiger Woods and other famous golfers will enjoy this competition and your brief stay in Malaysia," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was set to establishing itself as a golfing paradise in the region.

Currently there are more than 200 golf courses in Malaysia.

-- BERNAMA

AFY NM AAM