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PM: Promote holiday packages abroad

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today urged the private sector to promote holiday packages aimed at attracting more foreign tourists.

The Prime Minister said the Government would intensify efforts to promote domestic tourism with activities related to agriculture, sports and recreation, and shopping.

Dr Mahathir said this when opening the Malaysia Agriculture, Horticulture and Agrotourism '99 Show at Stadium Putra in Bukit Jalil.

The inaugural Maha '99 celebrates the cultural diversity and richness of Malaysia from an agricultural viewpoint. Themed "Agriculture Towards The Next Millennium", it is organised by the Ministries of Agriculture, and Culture, Arts and Tourism.

Dr Mahathir said last year, tourism attracted 5.5 million visitors who spent RM9.3 billion.

"In facing the new millennium, it is necessary we study the strength of the agriculture and tourism sectors and maximise their contributions for our benefit.

"In addition, the implementation of agriculture projects and agrotourism products like fruit orchards, farm-stay, home-stay, water parks and others would help us achieve the aims of the National Agriculture Policy and meet the tourist arrival target that is expected to increase to about 7.6 million with spending of RM12 billion by next year," he said.

He said there were many interesting ecosystems, flora and fauna in the country including 15,000 species of flowering plants, 290 species of mammals, 150,000 invertebrates and 4,000 species of salt-water fish.

Two-thirds of the world's orchid species are also found here.

"The country also has hills and mountains suitable for temperate flowers."

As Maha '99 would bring much benefit to society and parties involved, Dr Mahathir reiterated his call for everyone especially State Governments, the private sector, farmers, livestock rearers and fishermen to make it a success.

Dr Mahathir said a highlight of the celebration would be the launch of the National Farmers, Fishermen and Livestock Rearers Day and the opening of the Asia Agricultural Exposition and Convention on Aug 26.

Also present were Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali; Agriculture Minister Datuk Amar Dr Sulaiman Daud; Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and Information Minister Tan Sri Mohd Khalid Yaakob.

Guests were later treated to a show portraying agricultural activities.

In conjunction with Maha '99, there will be a Floral Carnival at the National Sports Complex till July 11, a Floral Parade (Dataran Merdeka, tomorrow), a floral exhibition (Pasar Tani, Jalan Ipoh, tomorrow to Tuesday) and sale of local fruit (pasar tani, Jalan Ipoh, tomorrow to Tuesday).

The Maha '99 Secretariat can be reached at 03-2965656/03-2925810, fax: 03-2930207 or at [www.hotspotz.com](http://www.hotspotz.com) or <http://agrolink.moa.my>.

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