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PM: Govt will promote golf-related activities

Adeline Ong

THE Government is keen to promote golf-related activities as part of efforts to develop the tourism sector given the substantial contributions tourism makes to foreign exchange earnings, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said yesterday.

Speaking at the World Cup Golf Malaysia opening dinner in Kuala Lumpur, he said that golfing as a sport is closely linked to tourism.

"This is because tourists are greatly attracted to the beautifully landscaped greenery of the golf courses and holiday resorts which are usually developed together in Malaysia.

"Thus, golfers and tourists can find both accommodation and golfing facilities in an attractive surrounding while being able to savour the culinary and cultural heritage of Malaysia.

"Malaysia currently is a very inexpensive destination, thanks to the devaluation of the Malaysian currency," Mahathir said.

He also said that golf in Malaysia is fast catching up. The rapid development of golf courses in Malaysia in the last 10 years is evidence of this popularity. Currently, there are more than 200 golf courses in the country.

"The interest among Malaysians to play golf is most encouraging. This has been made especially possible with golf institutions providing necessary leadership and corporate bodies making available financial sponsorships in big events such as this.

"It is no surprise then that with all the increased interest among corporate executives and investors, golf clubs have mushroomed everywhere. Malaysia is set to establish itself as a golfing paradise in the region," Dr Mahathir said.

Malaysia is playing host to the World Cup Golf for the first time since its inception in 1953 which began as the Canada Cup in Montreal.

"The World Cup Golf was conceived as a promotion of international goodwill and it has been proven that golf could be an effective instrument for promoting international relations where people of diverse cultures, beliefs and nationalities could come together in a sporting atmosphere.

"Indeed, this tournament provides a significant forum for various countries to meet, compete and enhance the spirit of friendship and cordiality," he said.

The organising committee of the World Cup Golf Malaysia 1999 has adopted a special theme for the event - "Go for the Green".

"It is most befitting - the greenery of Malaysia's tropical rainforests and the importance of environment preservation. The theme is most consistent with sustainable development, a principle Malaysia has always adhered to," he added.

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