

PM: Langkawi has the edge

Nst 2 JUN 2000

Preferred to destinations like Singapore

By K. Bala and Noor
Adzman Baharuddin

LANGKAWI, Thurs. — Malaysia, especially Langkawi, has the competitive edge over other foreign tourist destinations like Singapore, in attracting visitors, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said the cost of living, hotel room rates and wages were much lower, making Malaysian destinations attractive and cheap.

"Besides hotel rooms, goods and other services are also cheap," he told reporters after visiting the Oriental Village at the foothills of Gunung Macincang here, which will open for business soon.

The village will house several shopping outlets where branded goods will be imported direct from manufacturers. It will also have several restaurants and souvenir

outlets.

Dr Mahathir said with the Oriental Village "it will be possible for us to secure the goods directly, which means our prices will be competitive."

On competition from Singapore, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia had an edge over the republic.

Malaysia's advantage, he said, lay in things like cheaper hotel rooms.

"A room in a five-star hotel in Malaysia costs less than US\$100 (RM380) per night.

"This is because the cost of living in Malaysia is low, and despite low wages, our workers enjoy a good life and purchasing power," he said.

He said because of all these factors, people will find Malaysia the cheaper holiday destination.

Moreover, construction costs in Malaysia were lower than that in Singapore.

Citing an example, he said, a house that costs S\$1 million in Singapore is only worth about RM300,000 in Malaysia.

This is why many Singaporeans were investing in Malaysia.

Realising this competitive edge, Dr Mahathir said more money will be spent to develop Langkawi and other resorts in the country.

On the study being carried out for the proposed cable car project from the foothills of the Oriental Village to the 213.3m high Gunung Macincang, Dr Mahathir said the Government viewed the project positively.

He said studies had so far shown that the flora and fauna on the hill, besides the panoramic view of the island, indicated it would be a good tourism product.

He estimated the cost of the cable car project to be less than R M50 million.