

Mahathir wants more airlines to have direct flights to KLIA

By K. SAITHURUKA

KUALA LUMPUR: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad will ask Transport Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik to establish contacts with officials from major airlines to attract them to have direct flights to KLIA.

Dr Mahathir said he would also ask Dr Ling to find out why many airlines have stopped direct flights to Kuala Lumpur.

He acknowledged that among the reasons cited by KLM, British Airways and Qantas Airlines were low yield factor and that MAS undercut rates.

"They say they cannot make profit because MAS undercuts them. MAS benefits because it is using Malaysian currency in the country while British Air-

ways charges in pounds sterling," he said in reply to question about the lack of direct flights.

He added that landing rights was another issue which the Government would tackle after it reorganises MAS.

Dr Mahathir was addressing and answering questions from representatives of banks, hotels, petroleum companies and various associations during a dinner-cum-discussion on how to improve the tourism industry last night.

He also encouraged five-star hotels to increase their rates as they were considered cheap but said the management should provide better quality service in accordance with the rates.

He said Malaysian five-star

hotels charged less than US\$100 (RM380) while neighbouring countries like Indonesia charged US\$300 (RM1,140) and they still had a good guest turnout.

Dr Mahathir also urged building owners and hotel managements to light up their premises at night in an effort to entice tourists and create

an ambience of celebration.

"I would take note of building which don't light up," he said, adding that Tenaga Nasional Bhd had agreed to give a 50% rebate for electricity consumed more than normal.

He urged them to leave the lights on from inside and outside their buildings alternately from Aug 17 till

mid-September.

Also present were Culture Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir, Sports Minister Datuk Hishamuddin Tun Hussein, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Pandikar Amin Mulia and KL Mayor Tan Sri Kamarulzaman Sharif.

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