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`Promote Malaysia as a tourist destination'

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged all parties, especially players in the tourism industry, to do their best to promote Malaysia as a leading tourist destination.

He said everyone must do his or her bit, including spending "a little extra" if they must, to attract more tourists to the country.

"More tourists means more money for the country ... everyone will get to enjoy the benefits and rewards if the country prospers," he said when hosting a dinner with associations involved with the tourism industry here tonight.

As a start, he urged all building owners here to keep their lights on at night, especially during the Merdeka celebrations from Aug 17 to mid-September.

"If possible I would like to see Kuala Lumpur lighted just like the New York skyline ... it would have the wonderful effects of the night silhouette."

Dr Mahathir said Tenaga Nasional Berhad had even offered to give a 50 per cent discount on electricity bills for buildings which use more electricity than they normally do. "I hope everybody will respond to this."

The Prime Minister voiced hopes the corporate sector would sponsor the Malaysian flag for the Merdeka celebrations.

He advised hotel operators and others involved in the tourism industry to provide good and hospitable services to all tourists.

"Make sure they come back or at least tell their friends and relatives how wonderful our country is."

The discussions that followed his speech touched on the problems faced by the industry.

Dr Mahathir agreed that a lot still needed to be done on the areas of cleanliness and hospitality.

He also shared their view that unclean toilets and environmental pollution still posed a problem for the country and industry.

"We will look into these things but we want the private sector to also do their part."

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said since December last year Malaysia had registered about one million tourist arrivals every month.

(END)