

PM: Give-tourists a smile, they'll be back

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LANGKAWI: The Prime Minister has urged all Malaysians to show tourists friendliness and provide them with good service, even if they are not involved in the tourism industry.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said such hospitality from everyone was important to attract more tourists to the country.

"If Malaysians are friendly and have good manners, the tourists will return. We do not lose anything by being good to tourists," he said when opening the Skymall duty-free shops at the Langkawi International Airport yesterday.

Citing a neighbouring country as an example, Dr Mahathir said that country's tourism industry had progressed well because its service to tourists was "extraordinary" and the people there kept up a smile for their visitors at all times.

In the case of this island, he said the local folk had benefited much from tourism.

He said sales staff in particular should give good service to customers even if the visitors did not buy anything, and not grumble behind their

backs if they left empty handed.

Dr Mahathir said these visitors might have "marked" a certain item and planned to return to buy it later.

On another issue, Dr Mahathir said the income the Federal Government earned from this island was much lower than the expenditure incurred as the duty-free status limited revenue collection.

He said although granting the island such a status had meant that the federal authorities would lose on income opportunity, the move was necessary to develop the island rapidly.

Over the years, the Government had poured close to RM1bil into the island's development, he said during a question-and-answer session with the island's community at the City Bayview Hotel.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia's civil service had played a key role in developing the country, where in the span of 44 years after independence, the country had witnessed more growth as compared to a hundred years of colonial rule.