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Mahathir-Tourism

BUILD UP TOURISM INDUSTRY, SAYS PM

PUTRAJAYA, May 31 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called for the need to further develop the tourism industry in tandem with its encouraging performance.

The Prime Minister, who is also Finance Minister, said the industry could flourish with the inclusion of competitive tourism products from the health, education, sports and environmental sectors.

"The tourism industry has recorded encouraging performance despite the setback following the attack on the United States on Sept 11," he said before chairing the second Budget 2003 session at the Prime Minister's Department here.

Dr Mahathir said for the education sector, the country could develop into an international centre of educational excellence, while in the transport sector, Malaysia had the competitive edge to evolve as a hub for both shipping and airline services.

"This is in tandem with our aspirations to assume the role of global player in the international market," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the agriculture sector also had potential for growth by exploiting its strengths in research and development, biotechnology as well as developing the downstream industry for local products.

For the manufacturing sector, the Prime Minister said efforts should be made to shift the emphasis from electronic products to the creation of more diversified products based on local resources.

"We need to penetrate new markets that offer huge potential. We should not merely concentrate on traditional markets such as United States, Japan, and the Euro region but we should strive to penetrate other markets such as China, West Asia and Africa," he said.

Towards this end, the people needed to enhance their efficiency and productivity by encouraging continuous creativity and innovation to enable the country to compete in the global market, more so with China's entry into the World Trade Organisation (WTO).

Dr Mahathir said the country should offer products that were of high quality, which were competitively priced, and which could meet increasingly sophisticated needs of the consumer.

Today's dialogue was attended by representatives from 46 professional organisations, companies, as well as officials from ministries and government agencies.

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