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Budget-Tourism/BM

ONE FOLD INCREASE FOR SPECIAL TOURISM FUND

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 20 (Bernama) -- The government has increased the Special Tourism Fund from RM200 million to RM400 million to promote the tourism industry, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

He also said to further accelerate efforts to develop the industry, the government had also approved a Tourism Infrastructure Fund totalling RM200 million.

"Both funds are managed by the Infrastructure and Development Bank which offers loans at attractive costs," he said when tabling the Budget 2003 in the Dewan Rakyat here today.

Dr Mahathir said the country had attracted increasing number of tourists, who exceeded one million a month and expected to reach more than 15 million in 2003.

He said the government would intensify promotions including the Malaysia Truly Asia campaign and the focus being Europe, China, Australia, Japan, India, West Asia and regional market.

Dr Mahathir said: "Continuous efforts will be undertaken to promote Malaysia as a safe and tourist-friendly destination".

He said the programme would focus on quality services and promotions of attractive events like the Mega Sales Carnival and Colours of Malaysia Month.

In addition, sports tourism would be promoted apart from existing events like the Formula One Grand Prix in Sepang, Le Tour de Langkawi and the latest, the World Formula One Powerboat race.

Dr Mahathir said the government had successfully turned Malaysia into a health tourism centre where last year, 75,000 health tourists received medical treatment in the country and generated RM28 million in foreign exchange earnings.

"Hence the government will continue to focus and provide incentives to further develop this sector," he said.

In line with the government's efforts to promote Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur would be promoted as a tourist and shopping destination.

For that, Kuala Lumpur would be lighted with street and flood lights apart from being beautified with landscaping and planting of flowers.

-- BERNAMA

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