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Mahathir-Monaco

DR MAHATHIR LAUNCHES LANGKAWI YACHT REGISTRATION

By: Jackson Sawatan

MONACO, Sept 27 (Bernama) -- Malaysia officially put itself on the sea charts of the world yachting community Friday with the launch of the Langkawi Yacht Registration by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, here.

Speaking against a backdrop of super yachts moored at Port Hercules for the Monaco Yacht Show 2003, the most prestigious yacht exhibition in Europe, Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia had all the natural and cultural attractions to offer the discerning yachting community.

Besides the long coastlines in the peninsula and the northern half of Borneo, Malaysia had many beautiful tropical islands and had built marinas along the coastlines where yacht owners could make a stop-over, he said.

"We have a lot of beautiful tropical islands with clear water, white sand and coral reef...Malaysia actually has not been fully discovered by the yachting community," he said when launching the Langkawi facility onboard the Sweet Doll yacht on Friday night.

Besides cultural dances in conjunction with the launch, there was also a "pencak silat" or traditional Malay martial arts performance by four youths of the Patani Silat Group of France.

Dr Mahathir said the Langkawi Yacht Registration, which will be set up on the island very soon, was solely for the purpose of registering yachts.

He urged yacht owners to make use of the facility and to have their boats registered in Malaysia and to sail them over to Langkawi.

"Langkawi is a group of 101 beautiful islands. So, just going around Langkawi can be very interesting. There are many unique places in Langkawi itself but all along the peninsula there are also many other unique places, old ports, Portugese port and so on," he said.

Dr Mahathir assured yacht owners of the quality of service the Langkawi Yacht Registration would provide as it would be run by people who have a lot of experience in registering yachts and ships in the West Indies.

He also assured tourists that Malaysia is a safe place to visit despite some governments issuing travel advisories advising their citizens against visiting the country.

"I can assure you that Malaysia is very safe. It just happens to be in a region where sometimes it has got problems. But Malaysia itself is free from problems including from the recent attack of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome. We didn't have it in Malaysia.

"Also, the Straits of Melaka is said to be unsafe because of piracy. We are making sure that the straits will be safe if you keep within Malaysian waters. We have a series of radar stationed all along the coast to keep track of all the ships by-passing the Straits of Melaka and are also providing patrol boats to give you protection within Malaysian waters," he said.

Tourists would also find it much cheaper to visit Malaysia.

"In fact you can buy with RM1 the same thing that an American dollar would buy in the United States (US). The US dollar is equivalent to RM3.80 which means that the Malaysian ringgit has the purchasing power of about four times the US Dollar in Malaysia itself.

"Also, because the ringgit is pegged at RM3.80 to the US dollar and because the greenback is depreciating against the Euro, those who earn Euros in Europe would find the prices of goods and services in Malaysia extremely cheap," he said.

Malaysia also enjoyed summer all year round and was free of typhoons, earthquakes and other natural calamities, he said.

Dr Mahathir also spoke of how Malaysians of different racial and religious backgrounds live in harmony where "everybody celebrates everybody's festivals."

"It may be a Chinese New Year but it is celebrated by the Muslim Malays, the Indian Hindus...the same thing goes when Hindus and Muslims celebrate their festivals," he said.

Tourists also enjoyed the concept of "open house" in Malaysia where "just about anybody can walk into any house on these festival days and help themselves to the goodies that are served on the table".

"As the Prime Minister I am also to have an open house and I have as many as 70,000 visitors in one day. I could manage to shake hands with 30,000 of them. This is something that we appreciate; the close rapport between the government and the people. As a result, Malaysia has grown, has developed very well and it is considered to be the most developed of the developing countries," he said.

Thanking those present, Dr Mahathir told the yachting fraternity that he hoped "you will always remember Malaysia, Langkawi and Langkawi Yacht Registration".

-- BERNAMA

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