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Mahathir-Services

MALAYSIA WILL EXPLOIT SERVICES SECTOR- DR MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will continue to develop the services industry which expanded at an average rate of 4.7 per cent during the Mid Term period of the Eighth Malaysia Plan, the Prime Minister said today.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said education, tourism, Islamic finance, health, transport, professional and consultancy as well as ICT-related and manufacturing-related services would be further exploited to realise their full potential so that they could drive economic growth and contribute significantly to export earnings.

"The growth of these service industries are poised to accelerate given that most of the related infrastructures are already in place.

"In an effort to promote these services, the government will undertake more effective and coordinated promotion programmes," he said when tabling the mid term review report of the plan in the Dewan Rakyat, on the eve of his retirement as Prime Minister after holding the post for 22 years.

Dr Mahathir said to realise the full potential of the tourism industry, the government would undertake measures to promote domestic and international tourism and intensify initiatives in tourism-product development.

He said education, health, sports, agro and eco-tourism would be further developed to maximise the potential of the tourism industry.

To promote cultural and natural heritage sites, efforts would be undertaken to include the National Park in Peninsular Malaysia, the Niah Caves in Sarawak and the Maliau Basin in Sabah as well as the Historic Inner cities of Melaka, and Penang as World Heritage Sites.

Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said domestic tourism would also be intensified through attractive value for money packages in cooperation with the country's airlines.

The Prime Minister said the government would introduce the "Blue Flag" and "Green Globe" certifications to tourist sites.

He said the Blue Flag would be awarded to beaches that met international standards while the Green Globe certification to eco-tourism sites that adhered to environmental protection and improvement.

He said that eco-tourism, agro-tourism and rural tourism would be further developed to fully capitalise on the beautiful scenery, peaceful countryside and flora and fauna.

To promote the cruise industry, Dr Mahathir said Malaysia would continue to develop cruise centres in various parts of the country with the building of marinas at strategic locations such as Port Dickson, Melaka, Penang, Pangkor island, Klang and Muar while cruise terminals at Penang and Melaka would be upgraded.

This would allow cruise ships and leisure boats to sail to different sites of interest as well as enable tourists to engage in more activities and stay longer.

Dr Mahathir said existing jetties and passenger terminals would be upgraded to ensure comfort and safety of passengers especially in areas where rivers were the main means of transportation as in Sarawak and Sabah.

The Prime Minister said the availability of a sophisticated and efficient health care delivery system, alternative therapies as well as an attractive natural environment had positioned Malaysia as an emerging health tourism centre.

He said special tour packages with health components would be introduced while to further promote education-tourism, efforts would be undertaken to encourage private institutions of higher learning to improve education facilities and services, expand the curricula and enhance their teaching capabilities.

He said Malaysia would continue to organise sports events and promote new sports as sports tourism offered vast potential in attracting tourists.

-- BERNAMA

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