

30 AUG 2003

Mahathir-Chinatown

PRESERVE PETALING STREET CHARACTER AS TOURIST ATTRACTION, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 30 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the character of Petaling Street here, better known as part of Chinatown, should be preserved as a major tourist attraction.

The Prime Minister said the government would promote Petaling Street to the world as one of the tourist destinations in the federal capital.

"(Culture, Arts and) Tourism Minister Datuk Paduka Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir has promised me that he will promote Petaling Street to the whole world," he said when launching the "Patriotic Malaysians Mammoth Gathering" at Petaling Street.

The gathering was organised by the Malaysian Garment Wholesalers Association, Kuala Lumpur Hawkers Association and the Federation of Nan Ann Associations of Malaysia.

Some 20,000 people turned up for the event.

Dr Mahathir said Petaling Street was much better now compared to the situation 11 years ago when he visited the place to launch the Petaling Street Carnival.

"Previously, the shops and stalls were not very attractive because of lack of funds, but we have made them more orderly now," he said.

Suggestions had been made to further spruce up Petaling Street to make the area cleaner and more beautiful to attract more tourists and visitors, he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the government was always prepared to help traders and hawkers if they supported efforts like the Petaling Street beautification programme.

The two-phase beautification programme costing RM11.5 million includes the building of a pedestrian mall, new-look stalls and a roof along Petaling Street.

Phase one started in March this year and was completed in June, while phase two is currently in progress.

Asked whether the government had specific plans to make Petaling Street more popular, the Prime Minister said such plans had existed for 11 years.

"We have the plans (for Petaling Street) for 11 years already, but now that their (traders') cooperation is better, we can do it. We cannot do anything if people don't want it."

Asked if he was satisfied with the level of cleanliness in the area, Dr Mahathir said there was still room for improvement.

-- BERNAMA

AT AZZ YBY