

02 OCT 2003

Mahathir-Registry

YACHT REGISTRY TO PROPEL LANGKAWI TO GREATER HEIGHTS

LANGKAWI, Oct 2 (Bernama) -- The Langkawi International Yacht Registry launched today will propel Langkawi to greater heights and help Malaysia attract more tourists, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"With the Langkawi International Yacht Registry, Langkawi will be better known and we hope this will be the eastern point for people to park their yachts," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the registry was appropriate as many yachts in the region now, including Malaysian-owned yachts, were registered in the West Indies, Caribbeans and the United Kingdom.

Dr Mahathir said this when launching the Langkawi International Yacht Registry at Awana Porto Malai here where the Maritime section of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (LIMA) 2003 show is being held.

He said yacht owners need not bring their vessels to Langkawi for the registration as the registry allowed yachts to be registered without their physical presence.

He said the government in an effort to boost the maritime industry had installed 12 radar stations along the west coast of the peninsula and this radar systems would ensure the safety of ships and yachts plying the Straits of Melaka.

"We are also increasing the number of patrol boats and we assure you of the safety of these yachts registered and docked at Langkawi," he said.

Apart from safety, the Prime Minister also said yacht maintenance had also been given due consideration and for this purpose a yacht repair and maintenance centre had been opened.

"The boats can be repaired and serviced at this centre without much problem and in fact we can also build yachts, which is good for Langkawi," he said.

The Prime Minister hoped yachts registered at Langkawi would carry the Malaysian flag (Jalur Gemilang) while sailing the waters in the region and this would make Langkawi and Malaysia better known to the world.

"This can also contribute towards more tourist arrivals. When people visit Malaysia they will know that this is a safe country, contrary to some nasty comments made by some quarters about this country."

Dr Mahathir said Langkawi offered some interesting places to visit and yacht owners can see locations where the eagles feed and where stingrays could be fed.

He said apart from Langkawi, there were also a number of marinas in other parts of the country including Sabah dan Sarawak and this augured well for the national maritime industry.

"In 2002 we had about 13 million tourists but our objective is to have 25 million tourists. We want one tourist for every one Malaysian....we now have 25 million people," he said.

Dr Mahathir said at one time the world did not know or hear about Malaysia but now the nation was better known due to the efforts of the government and its people.

"There were times when we were frequently embarrassed because people thought Malaysia was in Africa or India. We had to explain and tell them that Singapore is located in the southern tip of Malaysia, he said.

Meanwhile speaking at a news conference after the launch, Transport

Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy urged Malaysian yacht owners to register their vessels here by utilising the newly-launched Langkawi International Yacht Registry (LIYR) facility.

He said yacht owners could obtain the certificate after a week through online registration.

Chan said the fee for registering here would be competitive as in Cayman Island and the British Virgin Islands.

He said yacht owners need pay only US\$800 for registration.

"I want to urge Malaysian-yacht owners who have registered their vessels elsewhere to bring back their yachts to Langkawi," he said.

Dr Mahathir earlier awarded the first certificate of registry to Tan Sri Samsudin Abdul Kadir, the owner of the yacht "A. Khaliq".

Chan said the move by A.Khaliq's owner, who had previously registered his yacht in London, should be emulated by other Malaysian-yacht owners.

He said at present 53 Malaysian yachts were registered with Malaysian Ship Registry.

"We will ensure that LIYR will evolve into a leading yacht registry of the world in the future," he said.

Chan said the registry service was being coordinated by the ministry's Marine Department. It would eventually be privatised.

Those registered with LIYR would also fly the "Langkawi Red Ensign", he said.

He said with the LIYR in place, it would stimulate the growth of boating activities and elevate Malaysia's tourism industry.

-- BERNAMA

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