

## **LAUNCHING OF THE EASTERN & ORIENTAL EXPRESS**

KUALA LUMPUR RAILWAY STATION, 19 September 1993

It is a pleasure for me to officiate the launching of the Eastern & Oriental Express. I see this venture as the quintessence of a number of aspects of life that are most important to us all.

2. Firstly, across the world, trains have always been an efficient and economic means of transport. Although in some countries they have been allowed to decay, in Malaysia, the railway system has been maintained and is making a very strong come back and contribution to national development. We believe that it will play an increasingly important role in our industrialisation and growth towards the Year 2020. We are encouraging KTM both to modernise and even to build new lines that will help open up the country. We have invested hundreds of millions of ringgit recently in upgrading our railways. The Eastern & Oriental Express is of course a very special and beautiful train. It complements our modernisation programme and represents all the most excellent qualities of rail transport at its very best and most romantic.

3. This train has been described as a luxury hotel on wheels and fits in well with up-market tourism. In Malaysia, we take our tourism very seriously but we take our country even more seriously. We have been blessed with a beautiful country with mountains, lakes and pristine islands populated by friendly people living together in harmony. We intend to conserve these natural assets while promoting tourism. We believe that these natural assets should be enjoyed by as many people as possible. It is therefore our intention to preserve our natural assets at all cost.

4. During Visit Malaysia Year 1990 we doubled the number of people visiting the country. Next year has been designated the Visit Malaysia Year 1994. It is hoped that the Eastern & Oriental Express will help to double once again the number of people visiting Malaysia.

5. Apart from this, a long list of events and festivals have been planned. Some of these are by the Federal Government and some by the 13 state governments. But there are also the ethnic and religious celebrations which will depict the different ways of life and customs of the many ethnic groups which make up the Malaysian people. Truly a visit to this country during the Visit Malaysia Year 1994 will be very interesting and worthwhile. Tourists using the Eastern & Oriental Express will be able to enjoy more than just a luxurious train journey. They will be able to see the festivities during Visit Malaysia Year '94.

6. This train represents the collaborative efforts between many people. Its route stretches from Singapore, through Malaysia, and into Thailand; symbolising a bold and imaginative statement of Asean cooperation, transcending not only political but also cultural, economic and ideological boundaries and bringing together the peoples of three South East Asian nations. With this project it is hoped that more tourists will be encouraged to travel to South East Asia, thus complementing and possibly increasing passenger air traffic into our respective countries. This is the kind of value-added project that the Government welcomes whole-heartedly. It is totally in keeping with the policy of letting the private sector play the major role in the economy, while the Government concentrates on administration and policy making.

7. I would like also to congratulate the foreign partners for their confidence in our policies and their appreciation of our potential as an international economic and cultural showcase. To the local partners their innovative and pioneering spirit is truly commendable.

8. I trust this train will not only enrich your perception of what the real heart of South East Asia is like but that you will also enrich the lives of those with whom you come in contact in your travels.

9. I now have much pleasure in launching the inaugural run of the Eastern & Oriental Express.