

LABUAN, FEB 18 (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY DIRECTED THE FEDERAL TERRITORY MINISTRY TO STEP UP PUBLICITY ON THE INDUSTRIAL AND TOURISM POTENTIALS ON LABUAN ISLAND FOR GREATER PARTICIPATION BY THE PRIVATE SECTOR.

EFFORTS TO DRAW THE PRIVATE SECTOR SHOULD INCLUDE THE POLICY OF GIVING POTENTIAL INVESTORS THE +GO-AHEAD+ TO UNDERTAKE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS ON A FIRST-COME FIRST-SERVED BASIS, HE SAID AFTER ATTENDING A BRIEFING ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE ISLAND BY THE MINISTRY'S SECRETARY-GENERAL, DATUK DR ELYAS OMAR, HERE.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO DIRECTED THE MINISTRY TO RE-LOCATE OR RE-BUILD THE SQUATTER HOUSES ALONG THE WATER-FRONT. HE SAID THE MINISTRY COULD PROVIDE LOW-COST HOUSES EQUIPPED WITH PROPER AMENITIES.

HE ALSO SAID THAT A WELL-PLANNED +KAMPUNG AIR+ (VILLAGE ON WATER) COULD BE USED AS AN ATTRACTION TO LURE TOURISTS.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID RTM SHOULD PRODUCE A 30-MINUTE DOCUMENTARY ON ALL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT IN LABUAN AND ITS POTENTIAL AS AN AREA FOR INDUSTRY AND TOURISM.

SABAH CHIEF MINISTER DATUK HARRIS SALLEH, DEPUTY FEDERAL TERRITORY MINISTER ENCIK AHMAD SHAH TAMBAKAU, HEADS OF GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS AND KETUAS KAMPUNG WERE PRESENT AT THE BRIEFING.

IN HIS BRIEFING, DATUK DR ELYAS SAID THE OFFER OF PROJECTS TO POTENTIAL DEVELOPERS ON A FIRST-COME FIRST-SERVED BASIS WOULD ENABLE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES TO BE SPEEDED UP. THE CALLING OF TENDERS WOULD TAKE TIME AND SLOW DOWN THE EFFORTS, HE SAID.

HE SAID SEVERAL LOCAL AND FOREIGN PRIVATE SECTOR ENTERPRISES WERE KEEN TO TAKE PART IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS IN LABUAN, INCLUDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ISLAND'S NEW PORT.

THE GOVERNMENT HAD YET TO DECIDE WHETHER TO EXPAND AND UPGRADE THE EXISTING PORT OR PRIVATISE THE PROJECT BY HANDING IT TO A PRIVATE DEVELOPER.

DATUK DR ELYAS SAID THE ISLAND WAS SELF-CONTAINED WHEN COMPARED TO KUALA LUMPUR AS IT HAD ITS OWN AIRPORT AND PORT.

HE SAID THAT 80 PER CENT OF THE ROADS BEING CONSTRUCTED, STRETCHING A TOTAL OF 60 KILOMETRES, HAD BEEN COMPLETED AND THAT THIS YEAR ALONE \$22 MILLION HAD BEEN ALLOCATED FOR THE PURPOSE. ON COMPLETION OF THE PROJECT, THE ISLAND WOULD HAVE A NETWORK OF 114 KILOMETRES OF ROAD, HE SAID.

THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS DEPARTMENT WOULD SPEND ABOUT \$6 MILLION THIS YEAR TO LAY TELEPHONE CABLES. HE SAID THAT AT PRESENT THERE WAS A CAPACITY FOR 600 CIRCUITS ON THE ISLAND BUT THAT ONLY 180 WERE BEING USED.

LABUAN ALSO HAD THE CAPACITY TO PROVIDE 36.4 MILLION LITRES OF WATER A DAY BUT IT WAS NOW CONSUMING ONLY 13.65 MILLION LITRES.

HE SAID THE CONSTRUCTION OF MORE RESERVOIRS WAS BEING CONSIDERED TO ENABLE LABUAN TO PROVIDE SOME 72.8 MILLION LITRES OF WATER A DAY BY THE YEAR 2005.

A FRENCH CONCERN HAD SUGGESTED THAT RESERVOIRS BE LOCATED IN THE SEA AND NOT IN THE CATCHMENT AREAS ON LAND AS THIS WOULD HELP SAVE ON LAND AND BE CHEAPER.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR RETURNS TO KUALA LUMPUR TOMORROW. --  
BERNAMA