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MAHATHIR-FREE PORT
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LANGKAWI, MARCH 3⁸⁷ (BERNAMA) -- PRIME MINISTER DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD TODAY URGED LANGKAWI RESIDENTS TO ACCEPT THE ISLAND'S FREE PORT STATUS WITH AN OPEN MIND.

HE SAID HE WAS SAD TO HEAR STORIES ABOUT LANGKAWI RESIDENTS CONSIDERING MAINLAND PEOPLE AS FOREIGNERS AND SAYING THAT THEY WERE NOT GIVEN OPPORTUNITIES TO BUY LAND AND INDUSTRIAL LOTS.

ADDRESSING ABOUT 1,000 PEOPLE, INCLUDING UMNO LEADERS HERE, HE SAID THE MILLIONS OF RINGGIT SPENT ON DEVELOPING THE ISLAND CAME FROM TAX IMPOSED ON ALL THE PEOPLE, INCLUDING THOSE RESIDING ELSEWHERE.

IT WOULD BE WISE THEREFORE FOR LANGKAWI RESIDENTS TO RECEIVE ANYONE FROM THE MAINLAND COMING OVER TO INVEST AND TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE ISLAND'S FREE PORT STATUS.

ONCE LANGKAWI WAS FULLY DEVELOPED AND ITS BUSINESS VENTURES WERE SUCCESSFUL, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD COLLECT MORE TAXES AND PLOUGH THEM BACK FOR THE ISLAND'S DEVELOPMENT, HE SAID. -- MORE
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HE ADVISED THE LOCAL PEOPLE TO SET UP SMALL BUSINESSES WITHIN THEIR MEANS AND HAVE JOINT VENTURES WITH THOSE WITH CAPITAL AND EXPERTISE TO SET UP BIG BUSINESS.

THE ISLAND RESIDENTS STOOD TO BENEFIT INDIRECTLY THROUGH THE PROVISION OF INFRASTRUCTURE LIKE ROADS AS THESE WOULD PUSH UP THE PRICE OF THEIR LAND, HE SAID. -- BERNAMA
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