

CNS1663

R GE 05-01 00165 EG717

aae tbe

Mahathir-port

bm

LANGKAWI, Jan 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the government would review the free port status of Langkawi as the island has reached the take-off point.

The review would include determining the suitable time to withdraw the status which was imposed on the island in 1987, he told reporters after launching the display of the Draft Structure Plan for Langkawi at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kuah, here.

He said the free port status for Pulau Pinang was withdrawn for the same reason.

Speaking at the launching ceremony, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said the government's move to make Langkawi a free port was to reduce the prices of goods, which benefited both the tourists and local people.

He expressed regret, however, that certain sectors had abused the island's free port status to the extent that some of the government's objectives could not be realised. -- more

♥05/01/14-50MST

CNS1671

R GE 05-01 00162 EG718

aae tbe

Mahathir-port 2 Langkawi

+The idea was to attract investors and tourists to the island because of reduced cost of development and low prices of goods and hotel rates,+ he said.

+Unfortunately, the government's aspirations could not be realised as the price of land shot up and the prices of goods rose because traders took advantage of the reduced tax to make excessive profits,+ he said.

He also said that the granting of the free port status to Langkawi meant that the development of the island was being financed by tax payers in other parts of the country.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir reminded residents and traders on the island not to resort to making excessive profits from tourism as this might only keep away the tourists.

He also advised the residents not to sell their land and not to blame the government later when they became landless. -- more

♥05/01/15-02MST

CNS1678

R GE 05-01 00158 EG719

aae tbe

Mahathir-port 3 Langkawi

On the Draft Structure Plan, he said it was prepared with the help of experts to ensure that the siting of tourism projects such as hotels and resorts was not at the expense of the aesthetic aspects.

+The development of Langkawi should be with restrictions so that it does not destroy the island's heritage and natural surroundings,+ he said.

The draft will be on display for one month until Feb 5 to familiarise the people with the future development of Langkawi and to get feedback from them.

The public can submit views or objections, which will be taken into consideration when drawing up the final report on the plan.

Work on the draft began in 1988 and was undertaken by the Department of Town and Country Planning with the help of experts from France under the Malaysia-France technical cooperation. -- Bernama

♥05/01/15-29MST