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Mahathir-foundation ''

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LANGKAWI , Aug 15, (Bernama)-- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir ~~Mohamad~~ a y announced the establishment of the Amanah Saham Anak Langkawi (ASAL), a special trust foundation to assist Langkawi islanders.

It was set up because some of the locals did not stand to benefit from Langkawi's development as their land had to be left untouched to retain their exotic characteristics as tourist attractions, he said.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said returns from investments by the Langkawi Development Authority (LADA) would be channelled to the foundation fund to assist the islanders improve themselves in several fields.

He told reporters this after meeting LADA board members and district heads of department here. LAD.4 joint chairmen, Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Seri Haji Osman Aroff and former finance minister Tun Daim Zainuddin were present.

Details of ASAL's role and its approach in assisting Langkawi residents would be drawn up and decided later, the Prime Minister said.-- more

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+We're not going to give the people money. We want to give Langkawi people certain facilities,+- he said.

According to the Prime Minister, the foundation might consider extending loans to the people here.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir said he was aware that the people of Langkawi were now able to enjoy duty-free shopping since the island was given tax-free status.

However, the island's tax-free status had also caused land prices to soar and many locals earned high income from sale of their property to entrepreneurs.

+But we realise that there are some Langkawi people who get less benefits than the others.-- more

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+For example, there are certain areas which cannot be developed. According to the Langkawi structural plan, if hotels are built on such areas, they will spoil Langkawi's attractions, + he said.

At the meeting, the heads of department briefed the Prime Minister on ongoing development projects on the island.

Although he was satisfied with the progress of the projects the Prime Minister was worried that there might not be enough hotel rooms during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition in November.

He estimated that 1,000 rooms were needed during the event.

However, he said, the government had already drawn up plans to counter the problem.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir arrived here yesterday evening for a two-day visit to inspect development projects on the island.-- Bernama

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