

Move to help those in under-developed areas of Langkawi

Fund for poor islanders

By Saiful Azhar Abdullah

KUAH (Langkawi), Thurs. —The Government has set up a foundation to assist Langkawi residents living in under-developed areas of the island

Called the *Amanah Saham Anak Langkawi* (Asal) or Langkawi Residents Unit Trust, the foundation will derive its income from the profits made by the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada).

Announcing this today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamed said the foundation would assist residents left behind by the rapid development of the island venture into profitable economic activities.

The Langkawi Structural Plan, which outlines the island's development as a prime tourist destination, deliberately excludes some parts from large scale devel-

tion in view of the gap between the two groups of residents.

Also present at the meeting were Kedah Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Osman Aroff, Lada chairman Tun Daim Zainuddin and Lada general manager Haji Khalil Mutalib.

Dr Mahathir said most Langkawi residents had gained from the free port status of the island and its transformation into a prime tourist destination.

"It is because of its new status that the price of land in Langkawi has increased tremendously and land owners are enjoying high income from the sale of land," he said.

On the preparation for the first Langkawi International Maritime and Air Show in November, the Prime Minister said he was concerned about the lack of accommodation.

opment in order to preserve the island's natural beauty and ecology.

Therefore, the Prime Minister said, there would be areas that could not be developed into resorts or for other economic purposes.

"Residents in these areas have not and will not be deriving as much benefit from Langkawi's fast development as those living in areas earmarked for development since the island was declared a free port four years ago," Dr Mahathir added.

He said details of how the foundation would be run and methods to be deployed to assist the residents would be determined later.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Lada directors and heads of State departments at the Langkawi district office here, Dr Mahathir said the Government decided to set up the founda-

tion in order to preserve the island's natural beauty and ecology. He said a plan had been drawn to provide temporary accommodation if it was found that there were not enough rooms during the event. To date, some 1,000 rooms had been requested.

The Prime Minister, who spent yesterday afternoon and this morning listening to briefings by Lada officials and visiting various development sites, said he was satisfied with the progress of development on the island.

He said Lada had approved several new projects, including the construction of a shopping complex, upgrading facilities at the Kuah jetty and the construction of an office complex for itself.

Dr Mahathir said he would like to see close cooperation between the Government and private sector in order to expedite development on the island.