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EXPEDITE APPROVAL FOR DEVELOPMENT IN LANGKAWI, SAYS MAHATHIR

Mahathir-development

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LANGKAWI, July 5 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the approval for development in Langkawi should be expedited as the federal government has already spent \$1 billion for infrastructural development on the island.

Dr Mahathir then directed the authorities in Langkawi to relax procedures if necessary, like in Europe and the United States, to ensure speedy development on the island resort.

+If officers are too fussy with regard to procedures, we will be at the losing end as investors will head for another place,+ he told reporters at the end of a five-hour visit to development projects on the island.

He said that the development plans of buildings like hotels in Langkawi need not necessarily follow strictly standard plans like in other towns where among things wide roads were required to be provided.

The prime minister said that simple building plans were implemented in several countries in Europe and the United States to cater to the needs of tourists. -- more

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Responding to a question, he said that the federal government did not plan to set up another central agency to manage development in Langkawi. The Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) has already been set up for the purpose.

He also said that government agencies was acquiring land in Langkawi to expedite development.

Landowners could themselves negotiate on the price of land with developers without involving government agencies, but this process was time-consuming, he added.

Dr Mahathir said that the people should realise that the land price hike here was due to the rapid development which would in the long-term benefit them.

He said that as a result of the rapid development including the infrastructural development funded by the federal government, the island now has 12 millionaires. -- more

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+This compares with the time when there are no millionaires during the time I was a doctor here,+ he said. Dr Mahathir served as a medical officer in Langkawi in the 1950s.

The prime minister also said that although the government had provided large funds for the island's development, up to now it could not yet collect revenue.

Dr Mahathir reiterated that the government would not change its decision that visitors to the island should stay for at least 72 hours to enjoy tax exemption for goods purchased there.

He said that tourists to the island should realise that the government intended to make Langkawi a tourist destination and if they did not stay for two or three nights on the island for tax exemption, this objective could not be achieved.

+Furthermore, how would the traders on the mainland feel if everyone who comes to the island for a few hours could buy goods at a cheaper price,+ he said. -- more

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Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff, who accompanied Dr Mahathir, said that state government was giving top priority to the approval of land for development in Langkawi.

He said that there was a slight delay in approving land for development and this was inevitable because of the large number of applications to be processed. -- Bernama

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