

Langkawi has made many JUL 1997 wealthy, says Dr M

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LANGKAWI, Sun. — Twelve Langkawi residents have become millionaires since the island was accorded free-port status in 1987, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the island's rapid development had raised the incomes of all residents and increased land prices.

Langkawi residents must therefore co-operate with the Government to sustain the island's development as their failure to do so would slow down development, Dr Mahathir told newsmen at the De Lima Resort after visiting several major projects here.

Accompanied by Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff, Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) chairman Halil Mutalib, prominent businessmen and State leaders, Dr Mahathir visited the Sheraton Hotel, the construction site of the Datai Hotel in Teluk Datai, the Telaga Air Hangat, in Padang Lalang, the pontoon jetty in Kuah and the expansion project of the De Lima Resort.

Asked to comment on the refusal of landowners to allow Lada to acquire land for Mofaz Air to build its flying school, Dr Mahathir reminded the owners that their action would only hamper the island's development.

"The residents must realise that the increase in land prices and the higher income they are enjoying today are the results of development brought about by the Government," he said.

Dr Mahathir said he had learnt that 12 residents had become millionaires because of the development on the island.

"When I served here a long time ago, there was not a single millionaire in Langkawi," he added.

Dr Mahathir also reminded local authorities to put aside bureaucratic procedures that could effect the island's development.

Citing the extension project of the De Lima Resort in Kuala Muda as an example, he said an additional 1,200 rooms were built within three months. If the project had followed existing procedures, it could not have been completed so quickly.

"To obtain the approval for the project alone, the developer would have to wait for between one and two years at least.

"Langkawi is a tourist destination and strict procedures which apply to other towns are not applicable here because they could slow down development."