

# Dr M: Help Langkawi's

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LANGKAWI, Sat. — The construction of the 1,500-room De Lima Resort by the Government was not intended to kill the business of small chalet operators in Pulau Langkawi, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"Instead, its construction is intended to help safeguard the future of the island's tourism industry," he said.

Some chalet operators on the island are charging unreasonable rates for accommodation but facilities offered are not up to expectation.

There are chalet operators who charge exorbitant rates for rooms but the facilities do not measure up to the charges.

"If we do not have comfortable rooms and the charges are high, the tourism industry in Pulau Lang-

kawi will die.

"What is the point of going for quick profit, if tourists do not get maximum comfort for their expenses. They will not return if they do not get proper treatment on the island."

The Prime Minister was speaking at a Press conference at the Sheraton Langkawi Resort here.

He is here on an overnight visit.

Dr Mahathir was asked to comment on complaints by some chalet operators that the Government wanted to kill their business by building the budget resort at Kuala Muda.

The resort charges between \$55 and \$100 for various types of rooms.

Dr Mahathir said if anybody was to kill the business of the small operators, it would be the operators themselves.

"Some of the chalets are in poor condition and some of the operators are dis-

charging sewage into the sea, dirtying the beach.

"Despite this condition, some chalet operators are charging exorbitant rates."

He reminded the operators that the brisk business they are enjoying now was the result of the Government's efforts to develop the island.

"The Government has spent \$1,000 million to develop Langkawi.

"If the island was not accorded free-port status, the operators will not be enjoying the existing fruits of development," the Prime Minister said.

The Government is willing to help the chalet operators build and improve on accommodation facilities if they show strong interest and commitment to change for the better.

"We can help them to have proper facilities and they can co-operate with the Langkawi Development Authority and Mara to improve

the condition of their chalets."

He noted that Langkawi had been transformed into a notable tourist destination in view of the growing tourist arrivals.

He said flights to Langkawi had increased from seven to 12 daily and Malaysia Airlines was now using bigger aircraft instead of the Boeing 737 to fly tourists to the island.

The Boeing 737 can carry between 103 and 170 passengers compared with the Airbus which can carry between 135 and 440 passengers depending on its model.

Dr Mahathir visited Teluk Datai, the barter trade project at Teluk Ewa, Langkawi Air Hangat Village at Air Hangat, Gunung Raya, De Lima Beach Resort, Bukit Malut, Kuah reclamation project, Jetty Point project and the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima '93) exhibition

site.

Earlier, on his arrival at the Langkawi International Airport, the Prime Minister was briefed on the proposed Lima convention hall by Ariffin and Associates' principal architect, Ariffin Mohamed, and the Hi-kleen sewage treatment system — which has been proposed to be introduced on the island — by Pembinaan Jabatan Sdn Bhd managing director Ahmad Johan.

He said the proposed cost of the Lima convention hall project, between \$25 million and \$32 million, was too high.

"Our budget is only \$10 million. I have some idea how to reduce the cost and maybe we will privatise the project."

On the Teluk Datai project, the Prime Minister said the resort would be opened in July next year. (A 120-room resort is being built at the bay at a cost \$70 million).

tourism