

Keep to quoted rates. Dr M tells hoteliers

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LANGKAWI, Sun. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad wants hoteliers and other operators in the service industry here to avoid profiteering during this year's Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (Lima '93).

The Prime Minister advised hoteliers to keep room rates at the published rates and urged the other operators to ensure reasonable rates for their services.

"I have never agreed to plans to raise room rates and prices of food during Lima as this is not the way to do business.

"If we want visitors to return to Langkawi, we should impose reasonable rates. Profiteering will only damage the nation's image," he told a Press conference at the Langkawi International Airport here today.

Dr Mahathir, who was on a day-long unofficial visit to Kedah, was asked to comment on complaints that accommodation rates on the island had been increased by 50 per cent over the published rates.

He reminded all parties that Lima was an effort by the Government to strengthen the economy and not for the advantage of a handful of people.

Hotel accommodation rates should remain at normal rates, he said. However, during Lima, it could be accepted if hoteliers did not offer discounts on accommodation rates.

Dr Mahathir said he did not want Langkawi to suffer the fate of Barcelona when it hosted the Olympics. He said the hoteliers there indiscriminately raised accommodation rates, causing visitors to feel cheated and to refuse making a second visit to the city.

Dr Mahathir's advice to the hoteliers was to stick to the published rates without offering any discounts.

Asked what action the Government would take to check profiteering, Dr Mahathir said the Government could only offer advice to the hoteliers.

Echoing the same sentiments in Penang today, Langkawi Development Authority co-chairman Tun Daim Zainuddin urged the Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Ministry to insist that traders prominently displayed price tags during Lima '93.

Daim said this was necessary to ensure that traders did not take advantage of the exhibition to indiscriminately increase prices.

"Many traders are exploiting the situation and their greed will spoil the good name of Pulau Langkawi and the country," he told reporters after opening a one-day seminar on the

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Traders told not to overprice goods

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Indonesia-Malaysia-Thailand Growth Area.

Daim said many traders over-priced their goods during Lima '91 and this had upset visitors.

"We have asked the ministry to study the prices at Langkawi, even the price of *roti canai*. All traders should display the prices of their items," he said.

Earlier this month, Lada general manager Abdul Halil Abdul Mutalib said the authority planned to set up a price watch committee to ensure traders sold goods at reasonable prices during Lima '93.

Abdul Halil said the Government had directed Lada to ensure that prices of essential items, including food, were not increased by traders to suit their whims.

Meanwhile, Daim also took to task the official travel agent for the event, Towerlite Travel and Tours Sdn Bhd, for quoting hotel room rates higher than the published rates.

Daim said Towerlite had two weeks ago given an assurance that the rates would be reasonable.

"According to reports given to me, some hotel rooms with the going rate of RM100 are being offered at up to

US\$75 (RM187)," he said.

On the excuse given to him that the rates were raised due to fears of foreign exchange rate fluctuations, Daim said as businessmen, they must be prepared to accept risks.

"All these excuses are totally unacceptable," he said.

When asked if the company would be blacklisted, he said if he had his way, the company would never be invited to Langkawi again.

He also hit out at those who were only seeking short-term benefits and taking advantage of the Government's sincere efforts to promote Langkawi.