

# Overpricing can harm island resort, says PM

By PAUL GABRIEL

LANGKAWI: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad warned yesterday that unwarranted increases in room rates during the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima'93) exhibition will harm efforts to promote the island resort.

The Prime Minister said Lima '93 was a government effort and hotel operators should not be obsessed with profiteering during the exhibition period.

"As it is well known, I do not agree with price hikes," he told newsmen after a visit here.

"To increase the rates at this time is not the ethical way to do business."

Dr Mahathir was commenting on reports that Towerlite Travel & Tours Sdn Bhd, the official travel agent for the event, was quoting hotel rates higher than the published rates.

The Star reported on Friday that Menteri Besar Tan Sri Haji Osman Aroff had ordered the Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) to investigate the matter which has become a hot topic here.

Dr Mahathir said he had all along

stressed that hotel operators should think in the long term and not about immediate gains.

He said he could understand if hotels offered no discounts and charged full published rates during Lima as it was a peak period, but over-charging was unacceptable.

Asked what action could be taken, he said the Government could only advise.

On claims that hotel rates rose by as much as 50 per cent during similar events in other parts of the world, he reminded that this was the case during the Barcelona Olympics in 1992 and "no one went back there because they felt cheated."

Chairman of Le'Proton Lima Sdn Bhd Datuk Radzi Manan urged those who had been overcharged to report to him.

Dr Mahathir, who arrived in a helicopter after visiting Kuala Kedah, Gunung Jerai and Pedu, inspected the Lima convention centre, the Berjaya Premier Beach Resort in Datai Bay and renovation work at the Masjid Al-Adha before returning to Kuala Lumpur.

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