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Rptng, changing dateline to "Labuan":

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Mahathir-labour

GOVT TO ACT ON SHORTAGE OF LABOUR AND PROFESSIONALS IN LABUAN

94

LABUAN, July 24 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today efforts would be made to import foreign workers, including professionals, to alleviate problems faced by contractors and bankers here.

Speaking at a press conference after a brief visit to this island, he said work on the RM360-million Financial Park project was now delayed by two months partly due to manpower shortage.

"I hope there will be no further delay," he said, adding that there was also little progress on the RM60-million Faber Merlin Hotel project.

He said that though the island had a large concentration of foreign workers, it might be necessary now to import Filipino workers as suggested by Economic Advisor to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin.

Daim, who heads the Labuan Development Authority (LDA), had expressed concern over construction delays, especially in building the Financial Park which is to be the hub of offshore financial activities here. -- more

Mahathir-labour 2 Labuan

It is estimated that at least one-third of the island's 60,000 population is made up of Indonesian and Filipino workers.

Dr Mahathir also said that although there were sufficient professionals in the country, many were reluctant to come to Labuan and they should be encouraged to do so.

The prime minister was, however, happy with the progress of the RM120 million Labuan Marina Centre and the Pulau Papan Agriculture Park.

The first phase of the marina centre is scheduled to open in December with 100 rooms and a 53-berth marina.

He said the Pulau Papan Agriculture Park, located on an island two kilometres off Labuan, had great potential to be turned into a large tropical fruit orchard and could be popular with tourists. -- more

Mahathir-labour 3 (last) Labuan

Dr Mahathir, who also visited Sabah Shipyard, said he was impressed with the shipyard facilities. He said it could grow further with substantial investment to increase the capacity of its shipbuilding to beyond 17,000 dwt.

During his visit, he was accompanied by Labuan Member of Parliament Abdul Mulok Awang Damit, Labuan Director of Development Datuk Nawawi Kamaruddin and Ekran Sdn Bhd Chairman Datuk Ting Pek Kiing, Labuan Chinese Chamber of Commerce President Tan Sri Wong Chik Lim and Waterfront Group Chairman Chua Ma Yu. -- Bernama

AG MGN

end of rptn

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