

# Dr M: Speed up the growth in Langkawi

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LANGKAWI, Sat. — Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today called on developers to speed up the development process of Langkawi to transform the island into an upmarket tourist destination.

He said expediting the development process was vital in view of the high expectation of tourists to the island.

"The growing number of tourists visiting Langkawi reflects the popularity of the island and the expectations of the visitors.

"The tourists expect the island to be ready to welcome them and provide them with the necessary facilities and attractions," he said when opening the Ekran Berhad's RM60 million Langkasuka Resort at Kuala Muda here.

Also present at the opening ceremony was his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Pahang Menteri Besar Tan Sri Khalil Yaacob, who was on the island to attend a Pahang State function, Ekran Berhad executive chairman Tan Sri Ting Pek Khiing and Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) general manager Datuk Abdul Halil Abdul Mutalib.

The Prime Minister said by the end of the year about 1.5 million tourists would have visited Langkawi compared to only 30,000 people in 1984.

"This is a record for any tourist destination in South East Asia," he added.

Dr Mahathir also reminded the developers that "con-

struction time is actually lost time".

"The faster developers complete their project, the faster they will rake in profits and the faster the Government can collect taxes from them," he said.

However the Prime Minister was very proud that many developers were able to complete their projects fast.

"They are competing among themselves to show how fast they can complete their projects. This is the fruition of the Malaysia Incorporated concept," he added.

Dr Mahathir was also happy with the receptive attitude of local developers to

Government's suggestions on development.

He pointed out that some of the hotels and tourist facilities constructed by developers were actually Government's proposals.

Citing De Lima Resort as an example, he said the construction of the hotel by Woodhouse Sdn Bhd was suggested by the Government to cater for tourists visiting the island for Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace exhibition (Lima '91).

"Since there are many developers who are willing to listen to Government's advice, the Government will not stop advising them on projects suitable for the is-

land," he remarked.

Dr Mahathir then gave "a piece of advice" to Ting to construct an aqua beach in Langkawi.

The Prime Minister was apparently impressed by the aqua beach or recreational beach developed by Japan in Oita prefecture when he visited the prefecture this year.

Dr Mahathir reiterated his call to safeguard the environment in Langkawi and advised developers to refrain from felling trees and levelling hills.

"Other States like Pahang should also adhere to the advice and save the trees and hills.

"We should consider trees

and hills as our heritage," he said.

On the resort, Dr Mahathir congratulated Ting for building the hotel in seven months and the hotel's Japanese tea house in three weeks.

The 260-room hotel was the first component of Ekran's RM1 billion Port Langkasuka project to be completed.

Other components of the project include other holiday resorts, commercial centres and residential retreats.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir visited the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre where a collection of souvenirs and gifts presented to him by individuals and foreign leaders were kept at the hall.

After the visit, Dr Mahathir said Lada was planning to build an exhibition gallery at Kilim here to display the souvenirs and gifts to the public.

"This will be another attraction to tourists visiting Langkawi. I have received about 8,000 items which now become the property of the Government.

"It is best that these items be exhibited and become a tourist attraction," he told reporters when asked on what he planned to do with the collection of gifts and souvenirs.

"At the moment, it cannot be opened to the public because we need to have staff to manage the exhibition."

Besides souvenirs, other gifts also include nine cars. Among the cars were Farazer Nash Solar Baby electric car from Austria and Daihatsu Mira Turbo from Japan.