

Future Langkawi development

LANGKAWI, Mon. — The development of accommodation facilities in Langkawi will be concentrated on building hotels to cater for upmarket tourists after 1996, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The construction of hotels would continue but it would be for the big-spending tourists," he said when asked by reporters at Langkasuka Resort here whether

the Government would allow the development of more hotels after 1996 as the island would already achieve its target of having 7,500 rooms by then.

"We may concentrate on the upmarket only, where the number of tourists are small but the amount of spending is more.

"Therefore, the number of tourists will not increase but the amount of spending will improve," he added.

On Saturday, at the opening of the RM60 million Ekran Berhad's Langkasuka Resort, Langkawi Development Authority (Lada) general manager Datuk Abdul Halil Abdul Mutalib said that Langkawi would have 7,500 rooms in 1996, nine years earlier than the target.

At present, 6,260 rooms have been established since development of the island took off in 1987.

Dr Mahathir also said development on the island would have to be accordingly planned to preserve its lure and beauty.

"This is the problem of tourism ... there will be problems if it does not grow and there will also be a problem if it grows at a fast pace especially for an island because we would be facing the problem of limited water supply, land for development and others.

to cater for upmarket tourists

"That is why we have to plan properly because we do not want Langkawi to lose its attraction... this has become a problem to the relevant authorities," he added.

Asked whether he was satisfied with the development of Langkawi, Dr Mahathir said he was happy that the private sector had answered the Government's call to develop the island.

On the proposal to build a floating hotel in Langkawi,

Dr Mahathir said the Government would study the proposal to see whether it was suitable for the island or not.

"We have to see the design and facilities. If they are adequate, we may allow the construction of floating hotels," he added.

On the activities of Amanah Saham Anak Langkawi (Asal), Dr Mahathir said it was not true that the trust fund was not active.

"Asal is now in the process of scouting for potential investments. When they have strong business and adequate profit, they will start selling their shares," he added.

Asked when Asal would start offering shares to Langkawi residents, Dr Mahathir said it was up to the chairman (Tan Sri Mohamad Basir Ismail).

"We build the fund first and we must have profit-

ability before we sell.

"The problem with our people, they go into business today, they expect to sell now and get profit," he added.

Asal was established in August 1992 to help Langkawi residents to venture in profitable economic activities and also to close the gap between residents living in under-developed areas and those living in areas earmarked for development.