

10 JUN 1996  
Langkawi-Price  
GOODS AND SERVICES NOT EXPENSIVE

LANGKAWI, June 10 (Bernama) -- Prices of goods and services in this duty-free island is not that expensive as it had been made out to be, Langkawi district officer Haji Ismail Hamid said today.

He said those planning to visit Langkawi should not be put off by the adverse reports as the situation was under control.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had only made a general comment on the issue recently as the situation was not that serious.

"We admit that goods are expensive in certain areas but there are many places where things are much cheaper compared to the mainland," he said.

"However, only the expensive ones are highlighted," he told reporters, here.

Dr Mahathir, who visited the island last week, expressed regret over the greedy attitude of traders who raised prices of goods and services indiscriminately without taking into account the future of the tourist island.

He said their action particularly during school holidays could affect Langkawi's image as a tourist haven and jeopardise government's efforts in spending millions of ringgit to develop the island while the traders did not have to fork out a single sen.

Ismail said despite the numerous complaints, the enforcement unit of the Domestic Trade and Enforcement Ministry's suggestion boxes at Kuah Jetty and Langkawi International Airport did not receive any complaints or suggestions from locals and foreign tourists.

"The purpose of providing the boxes is clear and if visitors find the goods expensive, they should lodge complaints through the boxes but we are informed that this is not the case," he said.

He said the Langkawi Development Authority and district office as well as other government agencies have met traders and transport operators' associations in this resort island to discuss the issue.

He said the associations had given the assurance that prices of goods and services would not be raised arbitrarily.

Ismail said the traders were aware of their social obligations and would refrain from tarnishing Langkawi's image as an international tourist spot.

"We are satisfied they will keep up their promises," he said.

He, however, said the public must be aware that not all goods sold here are duty-free.

He said prices of fruits and foodstuff are slightly higher as they were brought in from the mainland and as such, incurred transportation costs.

Ismail attributed the high fares for transport services to the non-standardised rates of self-drive rented cars especially during holiday season.

"We admit this and are taking steps to deal with it as such services at the Kuah Jetty and Langkawi International Airport are operated illegally," he said.

"When it is illegally run, certainly, the government cannot standardise and fix the rental rates but we promise to resolve the problem by licensing the services," he said.

During the holiday season, car rental rates shot up to as high as RM130 a day for Proton Iswara while the rates on normal days are between RM60 and

RM80 .

-- BERNAMA

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