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Mahathir-Sabah (Labuan)

IMPLEMENT LABUAN LANDSCAPING QUICK, SAYS DR M

LABUAN, March 6 (Bernama) -- Landscaping efforts to turn Labuan into the world's most beautiful garden island need to be implemented at a quicker pace, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"The last time I was here I had suggested that Labuan be turned into a garden island with trees and flowering plants planted all along the roads," he told reporters after surveying landscaping efforts on the island.

So far, he said, much progress has been made by the Labuan Municipal Council in its efforts to beautify the island.

Dr Mahathir said Labuan is now clean following its landscaping efforts.

He said the government wished to turn Labuan into a major tourist destination by making it the most beautiful garden island in the world.

"There should also be bicycle lanes and jogging tracks while the existing aviary needs to be improved," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the long beach on the west of Labuan is suitable for equestrian sports.

He also called on the people in Labuan to make efforts voluntarily in beautifying the island.

The rich could build bungalows or holiday homes on the island while developers could develop "time-sharing" projects.

Asked about the high prices of goods despite the island's duty-free status, Dr Mahathir said: "Prices are high because people hike them up".

On the development of Labuan as an International Off-shore Financial Centre (IOFC), he said: "There has been a reduction in IOFC activities due to the economic crisis, there has been less business and thus less need for loans... still, we are confident it will progress".

On his arrival here this afternoon from Kota Kinabalu, Dr Mahathir was briefed on the current development on the island by Federal Territory of Labuan Administration Director Muhammad Mohd Noor.

Dr Mahathir later left for Kuala Lumpur at 3.40pm.

-- BERNAMA

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