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Save Langkawi's green areas from development, says PM

LANGKAWI, Sat. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the prime mover for Langkawi's development since more than a decade ago, wants the authorities to ensure the island's natural environment is not sacrificed for development.

The Prime Minister stressed the need for proper planning to ensure Langkawi is portrayed as a tourism city.

The basis of any development on the island should also be in line with Langkawi's new image.

Dr Mahathir said this in his message in the souvenir programme book for the declaration of Langkawi's tourism city status.

The historical event held at the Layar Jam, right in the heart of Kuah town was officiated by the Sultan of Kedah.

"The Government is confident Langkawi will emerge as a popular tourism destination in the region," he said.

While the authorities, the Langkawi municipality in particular, strove for preservation of hills and mountains, scenic beaches, clean sea and islands to attract tourists, the people too should be involved.

"The people of Langkawi should play their roles in assisting government agencies in maintaining Langkawi's beauty," said the Prime Minister.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir hoped the island's newly acquired status would bring about a change in the residents' mentality towards tourism.

Stressing the need to keep the island clean, he said, residents should adopt a more serious attitude and work harder to complement efforts of those in the tourism industry.

He said the ministry would also look into all weaknesses in the tourism industry in Langkawi and where possible provide assistance, including help find funding to upgrade their services.

"The ministry would make efforts to help these people, especially chalet owners to improve their facilities," he added.

Meanwhile, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said although the Langkawi district council did not fulfill all the criteria, it was elevated to a municipality and given tourism city status because of the island's potential as a world-class tourism destination.

He said the ministry had always been positive and optimistic on the State Government's plan to upgrade the district council to a municipality with tourism city status.

Langkawi district officer and Langkawi Municipal Council president Datuk Ismail Hamid expressed special thanks to Dr Mahathir for being the driving force behind Langkawi's rapid development.

He said the living standards of the island's locals had improved compared to before the island was accorded a free port status in 1987.

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