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Dr M confirms duty-free status for Tioman

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SERDANG, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today confirmed that Pulau Tioman would be made a duty-free island.

"Yes, Pulau Tioman will be turned into a duty-free island," he said when asked about a New Straits Times front-page report today that the Cabinet had approved a proposal to declare Pulau Tioman a duty-free island.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at a Press conference after attending a gathering with staff and students of Universiti Putra Malaysia.

Pulau Tioman, said to be one of the 10 most beautiful islands in the world, will be the third island with duty-free status after Langkawi and Labuan (see Editorial on Page 10).

In today's report, a source said the decision to accord the status to the island, located off Pahang, was made to allow it to compete with Pulau Bintan and Batam in attracting tourists from Singapore.

Up to 1.2 million Singaporean tourists, most of them day-trippers, visit Malaysia every month.

It is hoped that the duty-free status would help boost tourist arrivals and receipts to Pulau Tioman.

The number of visitors to the island increased four-fold from 58,320 in 1987 to 200,209 in 2000.

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