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Dr M: Priority for seven projects in Pulau Tioman

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KUALA LUMPUR, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad has directed the relevant authorities to implement seven infrastructure projects in Pulau Tioman immediately as part of Government efforts to develop it as a duty free island.

The main project would be the construction of a comprehensive road system linking the island's east and west coasts.

Dr Mahathir, who visited the island two weeks ago, had also directed the existing jetty be upgraded, the river cleaned up and squatters relocated.

A sewerage treatment plant and incinerator will also be constructed as tourists are expected to flock to the island, reputed to be one of the 10 most beautiful islands in the world.

Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir said today his Ministry would monitor closely all development projects to ensure the environment was preserved.

The Public Works Department is currently finalising the details with the Tioman Development Authority.

"We will have a say in the development of the island. Dr Mahathir has directed that the island cannot be overdeveloped and he wants the environment protected," Kadir told a Press conference today.

Dr Mahathir had directed that the island's development must not be carried out at the expense of the environment.

Kadir said basic facilities had to be put in place before the number of rooms was increased to accommodate an influx of tourists.

The island was accorded duty free status beginning Sept 1 and is the third island after Labuan and Langkawi to be receive the status.

It is surrounded by eight islands - Soyak, Rengis, Tumok, Tulai, Chebeh, Labas, Sepoi and Jahat.

Pulau Tioman received its duty free status after Parliament had passed five relevant Acts namely the Customs, Service Tax, Sales Tax, Excise and Duty Free.

All imported items except for a few to be identified by the Finance Ministry would be exempted from sales and duty tax while all taxable services would be tax free.

Malaysian made goods would be exempted from excise duty.