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Mahathir-Development

STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT- DR M

PENANG, May 24 (Bernama) -- The developer of the Tanjung Pinang reclamation project in Tanjung Tokong here should ensure a balance between social development and the environment, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

He said the developer of the project should also think of the poor and provide them the opportunity to buy low and medium cost houses.

"There must be a balance in development. Even though the poor cannot afford to buy condominium units, they still have income and land to buy low and medium cost houses," he said when officiating the project here.

Dr Mahathir said that although Penang had generally developed with many tall buildings, there were still settlements which looked like those in the 50s.

The Prime Minister said that while driving through these areas with Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah of Brunei this morning he saw some people were still living in slum houses near the project site.

"It is clear that many people in Penang are still backward, living as though during the time of the Second World War," he said.

Dr Mahathir however was glad to note that the developer would also be building low and medium cost houses and not just high cost houses.

"This way, we can help the have-nots and this is the common practice in Malaysia where the haves help the have-nots," he said.

Dr Mahathir also hoped that when the houses were built, Penang's architecture, which distinguished it from other states, would not be neglected.

If tall buildings and skyscrapers did not reflect Penang's architecture then Penang will no longer be unique because it will be just like any other developed islands in the world, he said.

Dr Mahathir hoped the land reclamation project for up-market tourism, commercial and residential properties would be completed as planned and would not face anymore delay like that in 1997 due to the economic crisis.

He said he would continue to monitor the progress of the project even when he was no longer the Prime Minister.

"When completed, I will come again here for a visit not as the Prime Minister but in my own capacity," he said.

The Tanjung Pinang project is developed by Tanjung Pinang Development Sdn Bhd, a joint venture among Permaijana Ribu (M) Sdn Bhd (owned by UEM Bhd, Penang Bumiputera Foundation and Magma Bhd) and Koperasi Gabungan Negeri (KGN) Pulau Pinang and Penang Development Corporation (PDC).

Tanjung Pinang Development Director Datuk Dr Nik Mohd Kamel Nik Hassan said the reclamation of 397ha of the Tanjung Tokong coastline would take between 10 and 12 years to complete.

The reclamation plan would include the creation of a headland extension to the existing mainland at Tanjung Tokong and the creation of four islands interlinked by bridges and a circular primary distributor road, he said.

"The development which started in June, 1992, will be completed in 2015 and it is estimated that the population on the headland and islands will reach about 40,000 upon the project's completion," he said.

The development of phase one will include 1,279 units condominium, 135 units bungalow, 264 semi-detached, 355 terrace link and 1,300 units medium and low medium cost apartment.

He said the reclaimed land would be used for both commercial and

residential development, benefiting land-starved Penang as for phase two and three will house the commercial complexes, retail centres, recreational and leisure facilities, golf course and marina basins.

He added that to ensure a harmonious lifestyle for residents, ample space would be allocated for public amenities, recreational parks and infrastructure.

The project would benefit the eroding coastline fronting Gurney Drive and it would shield Gurney Drive coastline from erosive wave attack, thereby lessening erosion and helping preserve the fragile ecosystem, he said.

-- BERNAMA

SA ZU ABG