

20/05/2004

`Develop islands according to potential'

TIOMAN, Wed. - Islands in Malaysia should be developed according to their potential and limitations, former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad said here today.

He said each island had different products to offer and could not, therefore, be developed in tandem with the others.

"The Government should plan and develop each island separately, based on its own characteristics and potential," he said at the Berjaya Tioman Beach, Golf and Spa Resort at the end of a two-day visit here in his capacity as advisor to the Tioman Development Authority (TDA).

It was Dr Mahathir's first official trip to the island as adviser following his retirement last year.

He visited the construction site of the proposed new marina in Kampung Tekek yesterday, the Marine Park and Kampung Salang in the northern tip of the island today.

Citing the different development patterns taking place in Tioman, Langkawi and Labuan as an example, he said: "Tioman has its limitations compared to Langkawi where it has water problems and space constraints due to the mountains.

"We also cannot compare Tioman to Labuan because the former cannot become an offshore financial centre."

He was of the view that the future development of Tioman should be left to the Pahang State Government and the people on the island.

"With the limitations and in view of preserving the environment on the island the State Government and the people must decide on the type of development they want."

Meanwhile, speaking at a dinner at the Dewan Shahzan last night, Dr Mahathir said the income of the people in Tioman had increased over the years, especially after it was declared a duty-free island in 2002.

He also suggested that more five-star hotels be built here.

"However, this cannot happen overnight. It might take one, two or even five years."

Dr Mahathir was accompanied on the visit by Pahang Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Adnan Yaakob, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Jamaludin Jarjis and State Culture, Arts and Tourism Committee chairman Datuk Maznah Mazlan.

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