

# Mahathir urges big firms to bring in new partners

By P. GUNASEGARAM

BUSINESSMEN should not set up too many companies in existing areas of business as this will result in their market shares being reduced to very small levels. Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said in Petaling Jaya yesterday.

In an apparent reference to companies which had obtained large government contracts, especially telecommunications contracts, he said established companies should rather bring in new partners from among companies already in the same line. In this way they would be able to avoid competition among themselves in expanding or trying to get customers.

Dr Mahathir said that the more than \$2.5 billion cable-laying contract for the Telecoms was split into four portions worth \$636 million each because of the large size of the contract. Even so, there were many who were unhappy with the award of the contracts to four Bumiputera firms, he added.

Although the firms were Bumiputera-owned, there was no reason why they should deal only with the government and only with other Bumiputera companies, he added.

"Their success should not depend on their Bumiputera status but on their efficiency and ability. After all, government contracts are not going to be forthcoming forever," he said.

He urged others not to be envious of companies which have become successful.

Dr Mahathir said the country was experiencing a communications explosion and an efficient and smooth system was necessary to process information. A good telecommunications system was necessary to achieve this.

"That is why the government has spent billions to have an efficient

telecommunications system. A good telecommunications system is necessary for development to take place," he said.

Dr Mahathir was speaking at the launching of Rimman International Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Kumpulan AKZ which is headed by prominent businessman Datuk Abdul Karim Ikram. Rimman provides computerised mapping and drafting facilities and is said to be the first company to offer such facilities in the region.

Datuk Karim, who is also Rimman managing director, said that the firm will provide Binafon, one of the four companies awarded the Telecoms cable-laying contract, with facilities to prepare 30,000 technical drawings in a year without having to employ

extra draughtsmen.

If the drawings were to be prepared in the conventional way, the firm would require 120 draughtsmen, which could lead to problems of management especially since draughtsmen were in short supply.

The computerised mapping system was obtained from Butler Computer Graphics of Denver, United States, which has carried out similar work for various US telephone companies. The system cost \$1.7 million.

Rimman will act as South-East Asian agents for the system.

Besides reducing the number of draughtsmen needed, the computerised mapping system would also reduce errors in drafting work and avoid wasteful man-hours.