

▼11/09/19-54MST

CNS0382

U GE 11-09 00223 EA889

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MAHATHIR WANTS RAIL SERVICE TO BE MODERN, DYNAMIC

Mahathir - rail

(EMBARGO: For use after 10 pm today, Sept 11)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said tonight he wanted rail travel to revive its popularity with the provision of a modern, dynamic and excellent rail service.

The prime minister indicated that the popularity of the service could be revived if railway stations were developed into shopping centres like airport terminal buildings, electric trains were used and double and multi-level tracks were introduced.

A good service and reasonable fares would also encourage the people to opt for travel by rail rather than by road or air, he said when launching Syarikat KTM Berhad at the Kuala Lumpur Railway Station here.

+Actually, rail travel has many advantages over air and road transport,+ said Dr Mahathir of the rail service which was launched in the country in 1885 to serve initially along a distance of 12.8 km between Port Weld and Taiping.

Until it was corporatised on Aug 1, the service was handled fully by the government through Keretapi Tanah Melayu (KTM), stretching almost 2,000 km from Perlis in the north to Johor in the south and Kelantan in the east coast. -- more

▼11/09/19-17MST

CNS0392

U GE 11-09 00159 EA890

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Mahathir - rail 2 Kuala Lumpur (embargo)

Dr Mahathir said that before the growth of road transport in Malaysia, rail travel was the first choice for most people but eventually KTM was unable to compete with road transport.

The situation should not necessarily continue, said the prime minister, outlining the advantages of rail travel over air and road transport.

+In fact, for a journey of less than 200 kilometres, travel by rail is faster than by air,+ he said.

In air travel, much time is consumed going to and from the airport because the passenger had to be at the airport at least one hour before the flight, he said.

+For rail travel, on the other hand, the passenger can go from the heart of one city to the next without having to be at the railway station well before departure time,+ he added. -- more

▼11/09/19-28MST

CNS0422

U GE 11-09 00202 EA897

aae

Mahathir - rail 3 Kuala Lumpur (embargo)

+Roads are often congested with vehicles and the journey is often interrupted, and sometimes takes hours.

+The train gets the right of way and does not have to stop. It has a fixed schedule and the fare is cheaper than air fare and for an individual it is cheaper than travelling in his own car,+ he said.

Dr Mahathir said he was confident rail service could develop with the government's move to corporatise KTM and make it a commercially oriented corporate body.

He said KTM Berhad should use the privatisation as a challenge to step up efficiency and productivity to ensure that the corporatisation of KTM was as successful as previous such ventures.

He also said that apart from providing more attractive stations and new tracks, the service could earn much income through provision of services such as bonded warehouse, inland port, container yard and parcel delivery.

In line with the government's policy encouraging tourism, KTM Berhad could also provide a comfortable, efficient, fast and quality service linking neighbouring countries and between major cities in the country, he added. -- more

▼11/09/20-27MST

CNS0425

U GE 11-09 00138 EA898

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Mahathir - rail 4 (last) Kuala Lumpur (embargo)

The prime minister said the proposal to have a rail link to the new Kuala Lumpur international airport in Sepang was a manifestation of the important role of rail transport in the future.

+The selection of Malaysia as the host of the Commonwealth Games (in 1998) calls for appropriate attention to be given to provision of facilities including transport,+ he said.

He reminded KTM Berhad that in its endeavour to implement new business activities it should be conscious of its primary role of providing efficient transport.

+It will be best for any new business activity to be related to its primary responsibility so that KTM will be more competitive than other modes of transport,+ he said. -- Bernama