

PM: Competition good for country

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. — The telecommunications industry should be opened to healthy competition so that it will give optimum benefit to the people and the nation, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

The Prime Minister said it was imperative to open the industry to competition for the nation to be developed to the levels achieved by notable developed countries.

"The development of the telecommunications network will inject positive impact on the nation's development.

"This is one of the vital pre-conditions for the nation to progress and develop in other areas," he said, adding that the relevant parties in the industry should chart their vision towards creating an era of competition.

"Healthy competition does not mean unrestricted competition. An industry infested with minor companies will not contribute towards the desired development," he said.

Dr Mahathir said healthy competition in the industry could contribute towards improving the quality and technology of the industry.

This could only be achieved if the competitors held strong financial power and had manpower.

However, the Prime Min-

ister noted that the era of competition was not aimed at killing or creating foes within the industry or at weakening the strength and financial standings of the competitors of the industry.

"Competition will only benefit the industry if it can contribute towards attaining efficiency and high quality at reasonable prices," he said.

Dr Mahathir said competition would be part of the measures that could create specialisation to resolve problems in the industry.

"In other words, it is not impossible to achieve zero problem towards perfection," he said at the laying of the foundation stone of Telekom Malaysia Bhd's Menara Alor Setar (Alor Star Tower) at Lebuhraya Darul Aman here.

Also present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Osman Aroff, Agriculture Minister Datuk Seri Sanusi Junid and Telekom Malaysia Executive Chairman Tan Sri Mohd Rashdan Baba.

Dr Mahathir said this aspiration could not be achieved without the overall involvement of all parties.

He called on every company to make a commitment to produce the best output to overtake the capabilities of its competitors.

The Prime Minister said the economic progress of a nation was based not only on founding a strong and vibrant economy but it should comprise development in total.

"Development on the basis of stabilisation will im-

prove the livelihood of the people," he added.

Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance of giving serious attention to improving telecommunications facilities in the rural areas.

The facilities should be fairly distributed and shared among the people including residents of the rural areas.

"Although supplying the services to the urban areas is more profitable we should not neglect the rural folk," he added.

In line with the national telecommunications policy, Dr Mahathir said he was confident Telekom Malaysia would assist in the development of the nation's telecommunications industry.

He said the policy was drawn up for the comfort of the people and to attract the foreign investors.

It was also aimed at ensuring the maximum utilisation of local technologies besides ensuring that the local technologies were also competitive with those produced by the developed nations.

Dr Mahathir told guests at the ceremony that the RM40 million Menara Alor Setar was the 18th tallest tower in the world.

The 165.5-metre high tower is the second telecommunications tower undertaken by Telekom Malaysia after the 421-metre-tall KL tower and will become a new landmark for the town when it is completed in April next year.

Its height is equivalent to a 41-storey building and it is tipped to be Kedah's popu-

lar tourist attraction as well as being a recreational centre for arts and cultural activities.

The tower will have two viewing decks at heights of 45 metres and 88 metres above ground level and a revolving restaurant.

Later, the Prime Minister signed a plaque and inserted his speech text and other items into a time capsule to signify the laying of the foundation stone of the tower.

Other items kept in the time capsule were the pen used by Dr Mahathir to sign the plaque, today's newspapers, photographs of the ceremony, sketch of the tower's design and architecture and documents on the history of Alor Star and Telekom Malaysia.

In Jitra, Dr Mahathir, when asked at a Press conference to elaborate on his speech at the laying of the foundation stone, said too many small companies would be unhealthy to the industry.

He said small companies could not survive the competition because they had no specialisation.

"They would suffer losses," he said quoting the paging industry in the country as an example.

Dr Mahathir said many paging companies came into existence but in the end they could not survive and ended up selling their companies to their counterparts from Hong Kong.

The Prime Minister stressed that the companies in Malaysia should emulate the Japanese companies.