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Dr M: Malaysia a technology provider

ALOR STAR, Thurs. - The national privatisation policy has not only succeeded in expediting the nation's development but has also succeeded in transforming the country into a provider of technology, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Citing the success of Telekom Malaysia Berhad, one of the privatised Government entities, Dr Mahathir said the company had emerged from a mere receiver of technology into a provider to other countries.

He also referred to the recent Telekom investment in Bangladesh and attributed the achievement to the success of the privatisation policy.

(Telekom was reported to have been awarded a licence by Bangladesh to install a digital cellular system in Chittagong, Dhaka and other cities and towns in that country.)

Dr Mahathir, who was speaking at the opening of Telekom's RM40 million Menara Alor Star - the world's 19th tallest tower - said the policy had also helped the people to acquire technology faster.

Also present at the ceremony were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid, Energy, Telecommunications and Post Minister Datuk Leo Moggie and Telekom Malaysia's Chief Executive Datuk Mohamed Said Mohamed Ali.

Privatisation had also overcome the bureaucratic procedures which had been hindering the effectiveness of the Government machinery, he added.

Dr Mahathir said as a result of the privatisation of the Telecommunications Department, many new and advanced technologies could be offered to the public within a shorter time.

"Besides being a profit-making company and a provider of new telecommunication technology for the people to enjoy, Telekom is also now a technology provider to other countries.

"We are able to enjoy new telecommunication technology at a shorter time... that is not all as it is now capable of bringing our technology to other countries.

"This is the development we achieved because we had consented to hand over a government body to the private sector," he added.

Dr Mahathir said the Government's decision to adopt the privatisation concept was not solely to speed up development in the country.

Before privatisation, the Telecommunication Department had been relying on the Government for funds.

"We had to allocate between RM100 million and RM200 million a year for the department. But now, as a result of privatisation, Telekom chalked about RM2 billion in profit," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Telekom Malaysia's success was also the Government's success as it had a 70 per cent stake in the company.

Stressing on the need to adapt to changes, Dr Mahathir said the country would lag behind if it did not do so.

"We could not avoid changes... if we did not emulate these changes, then we will be left behind.

"We will become backward and because of this we will be poor and eventually become a weak nation where other people could oppress us," he said.

Dr Mahathir, on a day-long official trip to Kedah, later visited the State Museum's new building which is nearing completion.

He also visited the Rakan Kedah house at Jalan Sultanah where he was briefed on the State's proposed projects for development, including the

Samudera Baru Darul Aman's sea reclamation project in Kuala Muda.

Dr Mahathir then visited Titi Hayun in Yan to see the construction of concrete steps known as "Canary Steps" up Gunung Jerai.

The State Government plans to construct 10,000 steps to reach the peak. So far, 403 steps have been laid.

Dr Mahathir, accompanied by Sanusi, Economic Adviser to the Government Tun Daim Zainuddin, and State Executive Council members walked up 242 steps during the visit.

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