

14 AUG 1997

Mahathir-Privatisation

MAHATHIR: PRIVATISATION ENABLES MALAYSIANS TO ENJOY LATEST TECHNOLOGY

ALOR SETAR, Aug 14 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that Malaysia's privatisation policy had enabled the people to enjoy the latest developments in technology immediately.

The Prime Minister said previously the people were unable to enjoy such facilities owing to tedious bureaucratic procedures of government agencies in decision-making before the services could be made available to the people.

"Before Telekom Malaysia was privatised, there were a lot of bureaucratic procedures which need to be adhered to before a decision is made. As a result, by the time a decision is made, the technology has already changed," he said when opening the Menara Alor Setar at Lebuhraya Darul Aman, here.

However, after privatisation, the company could easily keep abreast with the latest developments in the telecommunications sector as it could make its own decision to provide the latest services to the people.

"The company now brings technology into the country. Before we receive technology but now we export," he said.

Dr Mahathir said it was a similar story with regards to privatisation of highway construction in the country.

He said the government was prepared to hand over the construction and maintenance of highways to the private sector at a much lower price so that the people would not be burdened with high costs.

The government's decision to privatise was to help all those involved in the venture from project concessionaires, workers, the people and the government, he said.

"The concessionaires can reap profits, the government gets tax, workers at all levels receive better salaries and the people enjoy good facilities at a cheaper price," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the rapid changes sweeping through the country were inevitable as the country would remain backward, weak and easily exploited by others if failed to progress in tandem with the changes taking place.

The Prime Minister also said the people should change their mindset to appreciate the facilities provided by the authorities.

For instance, they should use the facilities at Menara Alor Setar wisely so that they could last long, he said.

He later opened the tower by signing his name on a plaque. Present were Menteri Besar Tan Sri Sanusi Junid and Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

The Telekom Malaysia-owned 165.5m high tower which functions as a telecommunications tower is also a tourist attraction.

It has a revolving restaurant, a souvenir shop, open cinema and public gallery.

The architectural design of the tower depicted a padi stalk symbolising Kedah as the country's rice bowl.

It is the second tallest telecommunication tower in the country after Menara Kuala Lumpur and the 19th tallest building in the world.

In his speech, Telekom Malaysia chief executive Datuk Mohamed Said Mohamed Ali said the company had allocated RM112 million for telecommunication facilities in Kedah.

He said the company would continue providing sophisticated and latest telecommunications network in Kedah to boost the state's economic growth.

More than 120,000 people have visited the tower since it was opened to the public on March 1. -- BERNAMA  
JM/ZA TS