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PM: Challenge for telecom industry to adapt to changes

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SHAH ALAM, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today said it was a challenge for the telecommunications industry to adapt to changes in demand and provide new forms of services efficiently and effectively to customers.

He said the demand for faster information was stimulating an unprecedented growth in the telecommunications industry, and as society became increasingly more information-based, consumers wanted faster and better information.

"Telecommunications in the next century will be digital, mobile and personal. We are now witnessing a technological progress forging ahead faster than ever before in human history."

Dr Mahathir said this in keynote address when opening the 1999 International Wireless and Telecommunications Symposium and Exhibition at the Institut Teknologi Mara Resort and Convention Centre.

The symposium and exhibition, organised by ITM's Faculty of Electrical Engineering and the Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia, will run until Friday.

Dr Mahathir said wireless technologies were seen as the prime movers in the telecommunications arena and added that wireless technologies and the Internet represented convergence of two of the fastest growing markets and developing technologies in the field.

"We can no longer distinguish and demarcate telecommunications, computers and broadcasting. Convergence also involves merging of the old analogue technologies with new digital technologies.

"Convergence of all these sectors is bringing along exciting new ways of accessing, processing and disseminating information all around the world."

The impact of convergence will see tremendous growth in products, such as personal video-conferencing and new kinds of messaging like voice and even video e-mail early in the next century, Dr Mahathir said.

He said the integration of services was the strategic thinking of the future as customers increasingly want a range of services from a single service provider.

"Logically, why should telephone, TV, data, the Internet and all the rest come from different service providers when it all consists of the same fundamental digital bits?

"Instead of having a satellite dish, a TV aerial, a fixed phone line, a mobile phone and another for the Internet, all from different service providers, the question that begs to be answered is why not have all these services from one single supplier?" Dr Mahathir asked.

He said Malaysia had the prospects and the opportunity to become a major global hub for telecommunications and multimedia services.

He said the prospects for the country's economic growth are tied to its ability to master the new telecommunications technologies and in doing so dramatically improve our capacities in every field of business, industry and life in general.

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