

# Open mind to privatisation

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## Don't use unsuccessful instances as yardstick, says Mahathir

KLANG, Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad asked Malaysians today to look at privatisation with an open mind and not use other incidents as a yardstick.

"They should not see things with a closed mind. The proposal to privatise water supply in the country has not yet been decided on," he said.

The prime minister was asked to comment on objections made to privatise water supply.

As an example, he said that if Telekom was not privatised, the services provided by the telecommunications company today would not have been achieved.

In government departments, when there was a need to introduce innovations, it took years to complete, and by that time, new products would have surfaced.

"Today, because Telekom is privatised, it is making RM2 billion before that, we used to give them RM200 million a year. Now, in return, we collect taxes from them and use it



for the people," he said at a press conference after launching the first Malaysian-made crane by Favelle Favco Cranes Sdn Bhd.

Told that the people fear the company may make losses, similar to that suffered by MAS after it was privatised, Mahathir said: "I want to ask what happened to other airlines around the world like Swissair and in the United States. They are all bankrupt due to the global economic slowdown."

He said that if unsuccessful instances of privatisation were used as a yardstick against it, Malaysia would surely be backward.

Mahathir said the North-South Highway would have taken the government six to 10 years

to complete if it had decided to build the highway on its own. He said that with privatisation, the highway was one of the best in Southeast Asia.

"We have so many privatisations which have been a success, like Telekom and Tenaga . . . we should use these as a yardstick," he said.

The prime minister also criticised newspapers for carrying pictures showing dirty water.

"We advertise how bad we are so that people won't come to this country."

He said he had been to countries where the atmosphere was so bad that it was difficult to breathe, but that this was not published in the newspapers.

"But here, even for the slightest mistake, we advertise and promote how bad Malaysia is . . . and enjoy it. (bukan main seronok)."

Pointing at a mineral water bottle, Mahathir said most people drink mineral water.

"They can just write about it. What is the point of showing pictures on how dirty the water is?"