

# Lower your rates, Govt urges Telekom

By SA'ODAH ELIAS

KUALA LUMPUR: The Government has urged Telekom Malaysia Bhd to reduce the rates of all of its services offered to the public so that more people can use them in their daily lives.

"We are urging Telekom to lower its charges so that more people can get access to the latest information," Prime Minister **Datuk Seri** Dr Mahathir Mohamad told reporters after opening a seminar on Developing an Information and Communication Technology Culture organised by the Umno Youth at the PWTC yesterday.

The Government, through various concerns, is the biggest shareholder in Telekom.

Telekom had recently revised the rates for domestic calls. Effective March 1, all local calls cost 8 sen for the first two minutes and 4 sen for every subsequent minute.

The previous rates were 9 sen for the first three minutes and 3 sen for every subsequent minute.

The rates for domestic long-distance calls have been reduced between 23% and 54% while the rates for international direct dialling (IDD) calls were lowered between 7% and 67%.

Asked if Telekom was interested in taking over Technology Resources Industries Bhd (TRI) now that its stake in the telecommunication company has increased to 15.6% following its purchase of the company's additional 13.2% early in the week, Dr Mahathir, who is also Finance Minister, said:

"Telekom is definitely interested in taking over TRI based on its purchase of additional TRI shares."

However, he declined to speculate when the takeover would take

## Dr M: No need for nine telcos

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place; or if it would take place.

"I don't know," he replied when asked for specifics on the proposed takeover.

"But I am sure that Telekom will give a fair deal to the public (if it takes over TRI)," he added.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia did not need many telecommunication companies.

"We need only three, not too big a number, especially with the emergence of the third generation (3G) service that is going to involve a very high investment.

"Many countries which

have gone into the 3G have fallen flat on their faces. Even NTT (Japan's telecom giant) which came out with DoCoMo (Inc) is finding it a problem. Sales is good but it is not generating enough revenue," he added.

Commenting on the increased figure in trade and export for last month, Dr Mahathir said the statistics would surely contribute to the growth of the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in the first quarter of the year.

"More importantly, it is the indication that the world economy is recovering, particular-

ly the economy of the United States which has grown by more than 5% in the first quarter.

"We expect the turnaround in the US economy would be followed by the turnaround of all its trading partners," he said, adding that the development would see an increase in the demand for Malaysian products, especially electronic chips.

Asked if this meant that he would be projecting a higher growth figure for the first quarter, Dr Mahathir said: "I will not try to put a figure. I am a very cautious man."

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