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`Telekom eyeing TRI for some time'

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Telekom Malaysia Bhd has eyed debt-ridden cellular network provider Technology Resources Industries Bhd for some time.

"Well, Telekom has been interested in taking over TRI for quite some time but it is the question of the price," he said.

"It is up to them to decide," he said after launching the Finance Ministry's `A Day With Customers' in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

The Prime Minister said the move would be in line with government efforts towards consolidating the telecommunications industry as there are far too many players holding licences at the moment.

On Friday, Telekom Malaysia Bhd denied speculation that it was buying the controlling TRI shares from Deutsche Telekom AG and TRI chairman and executive director Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli.

In a statement to the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange, Telekom Malaysia said it had not offered to buy the 21 per cent stake.

Tajudin controls a 24.3 per cent stake in TRI while Deutsche Telekom holds 21 per cent of the company.

TRI, which owns Celcom (Malaysia) Sdn Bhd, last week received its shareholders' approval to carry out a restricted share issue of RM1.05 billion as part of its recapitalisation and restructuring exercise to reduce its RM4.2 billion debt.

Telekom's shares gained 30 sen yesterday to RM9.75 while TRI put on four sen to RM3.24.

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