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Mahathir-Privatisation

PRIVATISATION CONTRIBUTES MUCH TO MALAYSIA'S DEVELOPMENT, SAYS PM

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb 10 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that despite criticisms against privatisation, the move has actually contributed significantly towards the development of the country as proven by Telekom Malaysia Berhad.

He said that besides enabling the telecommunications giant to chalk up an annual profit of about RM1 billion, privatisation also offers better salaries for its officers and staff.

"Through privatisation, it is obvious that not only its services could be developed rapidly, its workers also derive much benefit," he said when launching the 77-storey Menara Telekom here.

Dr Mahathir said that prior to its privatisation, the government had to spend billions of ringgit to run the Telecommunications Department but now, besides no longer having to fund the telecommunications services, the government had obtained revenue from the profits of Telekom Malaysia.

The Prime Minister said that sometimes privatisation failed in its implementation especially during the economic slowdown but it remained the best approach to expedite the country's development.

He said that Telekom Malaysia was now competing with several telecommunications companies and this was vital to ensure that the consumers enjoy efficient service.

"Those who provide efficient service will emerge as the successful ones," he said.

Dr Mahathir called on the companies to improve their services to avoid public complaints including over their difficulty faced by consumers in using their mobile phones.

According to him, this would not reflect positively the efforts taken and technology used in providing local communications infrastructure.

He hoped that telecommunications companies would deal with this matter by expanding the scope of their coverage.

Dr Mahathir also drew attention to the telecommunications transmission towers which had been erected indiscriminately.

He said that there should have been only one party erecting the transmission towers, in an attractive design, to be leased to the telecommunications companies.

Dr Mahathir said that in this way, there could be some aesthetic elements and more importantly, the number of such towers could be reduced.

"Even though we have been pressuring them, the telecommunications companies do not wish to have an efficient set-up which will benefit all of them through the use of common towers," he said.

The Prime Minister hoped that the transmission system facilities at Menara Telekom would also be used by other telecommunications companies.

"If we could only share our facilities, it will reduce cost and enhance Kuala Lumpur's skyline," he said.

Earlier in his speech, Dr Mahathir said that he was glad that Menara Telekom, which according to some reports was built at around RM600 million, was finally completed, after eight years.

According to him, it was a landmark for the achievements of the telecommunications services in Malaysia.

The 310-metre tall building, designed like a bamboo shoot, is the work of local architect Hijjas Kasturi.

The building, operated under an integrated building management system,

has an office space of 85,000 sq m and can accommodate about 6,000 workers.

An interesting feature is the 22 sky gardens each located on every three floors of the building.

Telekom Malaysia chairman Tan Sri Mohamed Radzi Mansor, in his speech, said that the company may not be constructing new towers.

He said that in line with the call by the government for telecommunications companies to share transmission tower facilities to reduce construction cost, Telekom Malaysia was offering interested parties the lease of office space in the new building.

He said that among the international companies which have done so are Daimler-Chrysler and Hapag-Lloyd. Tenaga Nasional Berhad's Information Technology Division is also located there.

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