

# PM: NO NEED FOR HIGH-SPEED, RAIL YET

**Government's focus is on improving existing railway system, says Dr M**

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**M**ALAYSIA does not need a high-speed rail service yet, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday.

"At the moment, a high-speed rail (service) is not really necessary for Malaysia, especially as it is only between Singapore and Kuala Lumpur.

"Later on, we might need a high-speed rail service from Johor Baru to Penang or even to the Thai border. So, we will not build the high-speed rail service yet," he said after launching the Local Rail Engineering Innovation Exhibition and Technology Showcase (Technomart).

Dr Mahathir said the government was more keen on improving existing railway services.

"We want to improve the quality of service provided by our railway system and that has been done to some extent by double tracking and electrification."

The prime minister, however, said Malaysia would resume discussions with Singapore within two years to discuss the High-



*Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad visiting an exhibition booth at the Local Rail Engineering Innovation Exhibition and Technology Showcase in Cyberjaya yesterday. PIC BY AHMAD IRHAM MOHD NOOR*

Speed Rail (HSR) project.

"We have spoken to Singapore. For the time being, we are not going to build (the high-speed rail). We (have) asked for two years before we begin talks again. (For) the HSR at the moment, we are not giving out any contracts, but we have had to compensate Singapore earlier."

He was also asked whether Singapore would be agreeable to the idea of the HSR being connected to the Thai border.

"No, I don't think they will consider. We only think about Kuala Lumpur."

On the possibility of having an HSR line from Johor Baru to Penang, the prime minister said

Malaysia would eventually need this.

"When the time comes. We are not yet in need of such an alignment. Eventually, we will need it."

On Sept 5 last year, Singapore agreed to suspend construction of the HSR project until the end of May 2020.

As a result, Malaysia agreed to

pay an abortive cost of S\$15 million (RM45.6 million) to Singapore by Jan 31.

Dr Mahathir also said Malaysians had begun to appreciate using the railway system, which had improved over time.

He said some Malaysians would rather use railway services than drive and face traffic jams.