

PM briefed on Huawei's technological, business developments

BEIJING: There might be concern and backlash in the West over the security risk posed by Huawei's 5G technology, but Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad prefers not to just follow others, opting instead to tour the Chinese telecommunications giant's state-of-the-art research centre here to get a firsthand look at its advancements.

The prime minister was briefed on Huawei's latest technological and business developments by Ren Zhengfei, its 74-year-old founder and president.

The low-profile Ren transformed Huawei, which he set up in 1987 with 21,000 yuan (RM12,900) into the world's biggest telecommunications equipment firm.

Dr Mahathir and Ren, both on *Time's* 100 most influential people of 2019 list, discussed how to leverage information and communications technology to better facilitate Malaysia's eco-

nomical development and serve local communities.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia was keen to go big into 5G in the future as it was capable of reducing processes in several areas, such as manufacturing and decision-making.

Ren thanked the Malaysian government for supporting the company's business development in Malaysia for the past 18 years.

"We stand ready to learn and address the government's needs and share our experience in information and communications technology.

"Since entering Malaysia in 2001, Huawei has enjoyed robust growth. Our regional headquarters is in Malaysia and we have established 11 shared service centres in the country, employing 2,400 people, of whom 1,600 are local hires."

Dr Mahathir, here to attend the Belt and Road Forum for Inter-

national Cooperation at the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, has previously been clear that Malaysia did not find Huawei to be a threat to security "at the moment".

Yesterday, Ren and Huawei's technical experts explained the latest developments of its 5G technology to Dr Mahathir, who experienced cloud services.

He was briefed on benefits of artificial intelligence in medical diagnosis, environmental protection and crime prevention.

He asked questions during the briefing.

Using Huawei's telepresence system, Dr Mahathir spoke to students from Huawei's Seed for the Future programme, a collaboration with the Education Ministry, in Huawei's Malaysia office and Malaysia Global Training Centre in Cyberjaya.

Dr Mahathir had a look at the futuristic layout of the Huawei centre in the northwestern part of

the Chinese capital.

It is similar to a university campus, featuring three research and development buildings with courtyards and gardens.

The facility is in Zhongguancun, the closest equivalent to Silicon Valley in China. It is home to nearly 9,000 hi-tech firms, including some of China's biggest Internet firms, such as Nasdaq-listed Baidu and Sina Corp.

China's technological prowess and economic dominance, as seen in the "Made in China 2025" blueprint for Chinese high-tech supremacy and its superior 5G technology, have drawn accusations from the United States of intellectual property theft and of using commercial technology companies to serve state interests.

Huawei has been under fire, suspected of helping Beijing to extend its ability to infiltrate global computer systems and data networks.

Following this, several countries have imposed restrictions on the use of Huawei equipment due to the "risk of espionage".

Most recently, British government ministers called for investigations after high-level discussions about the United Kingdom using Huawei technology were leaked.

The UK government approved the supply of equipment by Huawei for its new 5G data network, despite warnings of a security risk.

Dr Mahathir had, however, expressed confidence that Malaysia could leverage 5G technology within three years if preparations were made for transformational technology.

5G supports faster speeds, lower latency and more connections than 4G, and its enhanced encryption algorithms, privacy and authentication mechanisms are expected to make it a more secure technology.