

PM: Private sector can run a national airline

KUALA LUMPUR: The days where there is a national airline for every country is over, said Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Malaysia, he said, could still have a national airline, but it did not have to be owned by the government.

"You can have a number of airlines. One of them can be called a national airline because it carries the symbol (of the nation), but it can be operated by the private sector," he said in an article that appeared in *Going Places*, the in-flight magazine of Malaysia Airlines.

He was responding to a question on whether there was value in having a national carrier other than for patriotism or pride.

It was reported that Malaysia Airlines was looking at a number of options to stem losses.

To another question, Dr Mahathir recalled that he had always flown with Malaysia Airlines and enjoyed the food on board.

"The food was good, and of course, being the prime minister, I get to fly in First Class."

On tourism, he said there were too many bureaucratic procedures in the sector and these had to be reduced.

And in some cases, he said,

Malaysians did not appear to be hospitable.

"We find that in some countries people are always smiling. They are very welcoming to tourists but sometimes, Malaysians don't behave like that."

On another matter, he underscored that the industries that could provide better incomes were the information technology (IT) and new technology sectors for which Malaysians had to adapt and to reskill to serve in these new sectors.

He said local companies had the capability to produce microchips that were produced mostly by foreign companies in the past.

"We want to go into AI (artificial intelligence), but it will take some time to materialise."

He said there were many investment proposals, but the government had to provide the work force, too.

He said the government wanted Malaysians to be conversant with new technologies so that they could serve in these new industries.

He said there had been big investments in Malaysia, amounting to RM30 billion (US\$7.3 billion).

"But they don't seem to get reported (in the media)." **Bernama**