

 Trade Ministry to issue permits

'ONE-STOP CENTRE' FOR LICENCES

KUALA LUMPUR, Sat. — All licences for business activities, except those for games of chance, will now be issued by the Trade and Industry Ministry, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced today.

Permits for operating games of chance and lucky draws are issued only by the Finance Ministry.

Speaking at a Press conference, chairing a three-hour meeting of the National Land Council at Parliament House here, Dr Mahathir said the Cabinet gave the instructions two weeks ago to the Trade and Industry Ministry.

He said the decision was made because some businesses such as hotels required too many licences.

A major complaint from hoteliers is that a hotel needs 63 licences from different Government agencies before it can operate. For instance, the approval to lay telephone cables would have to come from the Telecoms Department, the permit to lay water pipes from the Waterworks Department, a money changer's licence from Bank Negara and a permit to sell wildlife meat from the Wildlife Department.

At today's meeting were Mentris Besar, Chief Ministers, several Cabinet Ministers, their deputies and other senior officials.

Dr Mahathir, chairing the meeting in place Encik Ghafar Baba who is recuperating from an operation overseas, said each State Government had also been asked to centralise the issuing of business licences and permits.

He also said the Government would review the Environmental Quality Order, with the focus on toxic wastes, to speed the process of issuing licences and permits in order to boost industrialisation.

Protect documents

Matters pertaining to environmental quality, such as standards that were too high, had hampered this process, he added.

"We must remember that we are not a developed country and cannot have standards like those of developed countries.

"Nevertheless, we will ensure that whatever we do will not endanger lives."

Dr Mahathir also stressed the importance of large-scale agriculture in the economic and industrial development of the country.

He said although the total area of smallholdings in the country greatly exceeded that of large estates, production from estates had far exceeded

production from smallholdings.

He suggested the establishment of co-operatives to ensure that individuals would benefit from the development of large-scale agriculture.

He also spoke of the need to protect important documents relating to land administration.

The Cabinet had decided to buy a microfilm machine for each State and to use computer programmes to get quick information on the status of land ownership nationwide.

Meanwhile, the Federal Territory Malay Chambers of Commerce (MCC) today welcomed the move by the Trade and Industry Ministry to issue all business licences.

Its chairman, Encik Moehammad Izat Emir, said that the announcement by the Prime Minister was "excellent news".

"It's good news for a businessman as he needs only to go to a one-stop centre to get any business licence."

If one Ministry was in charge of issuing all licences, it would mean that the Ministry was aware of a businessman's position with regard to the number of licences he might hold, directly or indirectly.

"It will also mean better control for the Government to ensure that there is no irregularity, exploitation or abuse.

"This will also prevent, in some instances, any particular person or company from enjoying a monopolistic position."