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Mohamed-Censorship

CABINET WANTS BETTER GUIDELINES ON TV CENSORSHIP

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 23 (Bernama) -- The Cabinet today directed the Information and Home Ministries to streamline guidelines on censorship of broadcast material and to draw up new guidelines for vetting cable and satellite television transmission if necessary.

Information Minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat said the Cabinet realised that the problem of censoring such materials had been compounded by the advent of cable and satellite tv.

"This is more so with real-time service which requires a new approach for censoring broadcast materials," he told reporters.

The Cabinet also ordered the two ministries to train staff of real-time service stations on the types of censorship to be fixed under the improved guidelines.

Although there is the Film Censorship Board (LPF), its task has been made more difficult by the introduction of cable and satellite tv, Mohamed said.

Mohamed said the LPF may not have enough staff to cope with the workload.

For terrestrial television stations with pre-scheduled programmes of transmission, the task of censoring their materials was easier, he said.

As such, the Cabinet had decided to allow owners of satellite tv station let their staff do the censoring, he said.

They must do the censoring according to the guidelines set by the government, he said.

"We already have the guidelines but they need to be streamlined to reduce or eliminate negative elements, especially those contrary to our culture," he said.

The guidelines were introduced three years ago to cut out scenes on violence, sex, horror and counter-culture.

Mohamed said the secretaries-general of the two ministries would meet as soon as possible to work on improving the guidelines and training programmes on censorship for staff of satellite tv stations in the country.

The improved or new guidelines will be ready by the end of the year and implemented early next year.

He said any station which did not abide by the guidelines would face action.

"The amendments to the Broadcasting Act passed in the Dewan Rakyat last week empower the Information Minister to impose a compound, fine, suspend the services or withdraw the licence of any broadcasting station which breaches the act," he said.

Mohamed said Radio Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) was expanding its broadcast monitoring unit to keep tabs on programmes aired by local stations.

Mohamed said censorship was necessary although the government understood the need for the people to have access to information and education.

"We will control as far as we can in the hope that we can disseminate what is good for the people," he said.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, when opening TV3's operations centre in Sri Pentas yesterday, urged local television stations to be more responsible in their transmission by not touching on the sensitivity of the people and rejecting negative elements. -- BERNAMA

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