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Moggie-Access

EQUAL ACCESS TO ALL PHONE NETWORKS BY 1999

KUALA LUMPUR, May 17 (Bernama) -- By January 1999, telephone users will be able to choose the cheapest tariff offered by network operators to make trunk calls, said Energy, Telecommunications and Post Minister Datuk Leo Moggie.

He said with equal access, all subscribers have to do pick the cheapest rate is by dialling a certain code, which is now predetermined.

"The principle of equal access is that the consumers will have a choice of operator in order to make a call. He chooses the operator and the trunk line he wants to make use of," he told reporters after launching World Telecommunications Day today.

Moggie said the access will also be available to mobile phone users.

He said equal access is part of the provisions of the General Framework for Interconnect and Access (GFIA) launched today.

Moggie said a ceiling will be set by the government and the operators will compete among each other to offer the best rate for users within the ceiling.

"The role of the regulator is to come up with a rate that is fair, which is fixed as a maximum rate, which I suspect will be lower than the present rate," he added.

The GFIA, developed with the cooperation of all network operators, provides guidelines on how one network should interconnect with another.

Its provisions are to ensure transparency in the interconnection relationship between network operators, allow network operators to negotiate with each other and set a timeframe of three to six months and procedure for interconnecting one network with another.

At the launch, Moggie also announced the setting up of the National Council of Telecommunications chaired by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Moggie said the council will propose regulations and recommendations for the telecommunications industry, adding that "It will reflect fair representation of people involved in the industry."

Also present were Deputy Minister Datuk Chan Kong Choy and Director-General of Telecoms Department Hod Parman. -- BERNAMA

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