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Mohamed-TV3

TV3 GETS GOVT OKAY FOR 24-HOUR BROADCAST

KUALA LUMPUR, Aug 13 (Bernama) -- The government has allowed TV3, the country's first and oldest private television station, to broadcast round-the-clock.

Information minister Datuk Mohamed Rahmat, who announced this today, said the decision was in line the government's aspiration to have the widest dissemination of information.

Mohamed said the approval followed studies on the effects and implications of 24-hour television service via cable and satellite tv on the people's values and in the interests of information dissemination.

Mohamed told a news conference here that TV3 got the approval today after he held talks with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Asked when TV3 would extend the present service to round-the-clock, Mohamed said it was up to the station to do so.

The government had earlier rejected an application from Sistem Televisyen Malaysia Berhad, the company operating TV3, to provide a 24-hour service.

"Initially the ministry found it difficult to consider the application as 24-hour tv was unsuitable then since we want Malaysians to work hard. If they have enough sleep, they will work hard and not be engrossed with watching tv all day long," Mohamed said.

The government's objective was also to increase productivity and make sure that Malaysians are a hadrworking lot, he said.

But, Mohamed acknowledged that the situation had since changed.

Notwithstanding the effects of the advent of cable and satellite on the values of Malaysians at large, the government found that there was no serious addiction among them to 24-hour TV, he said.

Malaysians were now wiser in adapting themselves to television and would only watch suitable programmes at certain time, he said.

"I hope after receiving the approval letter, TV3 will discuss with the ministry how to slot in programmes into the extended hours," he said.

Mohamed likened TV3's newly-approved 24-hour service to a gift for Malaysians to mark the nation's 40th year of independence at the end of the month.

He said when TV3 applied for the 24-hour service it had proposed to fill up the extended hours with "infotainment" and "edutainment" programmes.

As for the government-owned Radio Television Malaysia (RTM), Mohamed said the existing broadcast time was adequate and would not be extended.

He said RTM would not be threatened by TV3's round-the-clock service which would in fact complement electronic media services.

On why the government took almost one year to give the approval, Mohamed said this was because he had to first study the effects of having 24-hour television.

"... it's not because of weaknesses in the government administration but because the effects of 24-hour tv need to be thoroughly studied first," he said.

To another question, Mohamed replied that the government could consider allowing other private television stations to broadcast 24 hours if there were applications submitted. -- BERNAMA

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