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Dr M: New ministry set to give multimedia a boost

FROM tomorrow a new ministry will assume regulatory responsibility for energy, communications and multimedia under the restructuring of the Ministry of Energy, Telecommunications and Posts.

The new Energy, Communications and Multimedia Ministry will also take over the regulatory functions of the present Department of Posts as well as all functions related to the policy and regulatory aspects of broadcasting from the Information Ministry.

The Information Ministry will continue to be responsible for policy development and implementation related to a systematic and effective dissemination of Government information.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who announced the restructuring yesterday, said Datuk Leo Moggie will become the minister for the new ministry which has been streamlined to develop the local multimedia industry.

Dr Mahathir said a body, called the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission within the new ministry, will be formed effective tomorrow with a launching grant of RM122 million from the Government.

He said the commission will assume the regulatory functions of the present Department of Posts together with the responsibility of implementing the Digital Signature Act 1997.

"The commission will be the single regulatory authority for all the three converged industries - telecommunications, broadcasting and computing," he said.

As a result, the role of the Telecommunications Department Malaysia will be displaced. Some of its present technical functions will be taken over by the commission.

Dr Mahathir said the first chairman of the commission will be Dr Syed Hussein Mohamed.

"Parliament in July had passed the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 and the Communications and Multimedia Commission Act 1998. These form the basic framework for regulation of new institutions that will speed up the communications and multimedia industry in the country," he said.

Dr Mahathir said these Acts are important components in the series of cyberlaws which form the "soft infrastructure" for the development of the Multimedia Super Corridor.

He said the new ministry will put in place an organisational structure that can manage the new functions for communications and multimedia with clearly defined policy objectives, long-term strategies and the future direction for a well-planned and healthy development of the communications and multimedia industry in the country.

"Some changes to laws related to licensing will be drafted and gazetted. Previously broadcasting licences were issued by the Information Ministry with some overlap with the Ministry of Energy, Telecommunications and Posts. Now the new ministry will take over such licensing," Dr Mahathir said.

He said both the Information Ministry and the Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia will however, hold discussions before issuing broadcasting licences.

Dr Mahathir said the Information Ministry will also be responsible for the management and operations of Radio dan Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) as

the main channels of Government information service.

On the proposed corporatisation of RTM, he said the matter will be further studied and presented separately for the Government's consideration.

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