

30 OCT 1998

MAHATHIR-MINISTRY

ENERGY MINISTRY TO BE RENAMED

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Ministry would be renamed the Energy, Communications and Multimedia Ministry effective Nov 1, 1998.

In announcing this today, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that its minister Datuk Leo Moggie, will be the minister in the new ministry.

The Ministry of Information would relinquish all functions related to policy and regulatory aspects of broadcasting to the new ministry, he said.

However, the Ministry of Information would continue to be responsible for policy development and implementation related to systematic and effective dissemination of government information.

The ministry would remain responsible for the management and operation of RTM, the Prime Minister said.

In July this year, Parliament had passed two acts namely the Multimedia and Communications Act 1998 and Multimedia and Communications Commissions Act 1998.

The acts were enacted to establish a rough framework, and monitoring, coupled with new institutional arrangement which would strengthen the development of the country's multimedia and communications industry.

Dr Mahathir said both the acts were important where the "cyber" law is concerned, where it has been designed as a soft infrastructure to support the implementation of the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

"We need to have a number of by-laws and rules which are relevant to the new licensing regime and which needed to be gazetted and formulated," he said.

All this while, licensing concerning broadcasting is under the Information Ministry's jurisdiction but it overlapped with the functions of the Ministry of Energy, Telecommunications and Posts.

Dr Mahathir said: Now that we have set up a new ministry, the new ministry would take over the issuance of new licences. However, for domestic broadcasting, both ministries would have discussions before the licences are issued."

He said the suggestion to corporatise radio and televisyen Malaysia (RTM) needed to be studied and submitted to another forum for consideration.

Dr Mahathir said that a commission called the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission would also be formed effective Nov 1, 1998, to be chaired by Dr Syed Hussein Mohamed, who between 1993-1998 was involved in engineering consultancy.

Dr Syed Hussein, who holds a doctorate in quality engineering from Birmingham University, resigned as executive director of Telekom Malaysia Bhd in June 1993 to set up an engineering consultancy firm but remained as non-executive director of the utility firm.

In 1985, he was appointed director of Sime Darby Bhd, responsible for all of the group's Malaysian engineering, manufacturing and trading companies.

Dr Mahathir also said that a launching grant of RM122 million would be provided by the government for the commission.

With the formation of the commission as the single regulatory authority for the converged industry of telecommunications, broadcasting and computing, the role of Jabatan Telekom Malaysia or the Telecommunication

Department Malaysia would be displaced.

Some of the present technical functions would, however, be taken over by the Commission, he said.

As the Multimedia and Communications Act 1998 would only be effective on April 1 1999, the telecommunication department would only cease functioning on that date.

The regulatory function for the Department of Post would also be incorporated into the functions of the Commission together with the responsibility of implementing the Digital Signature Act 1997, he said.

The Public Service Department and Treasury would study the structure of the organisation and the position of the staff involved. -- BERNAMA

AD/MK/AFY FR