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MOGGIE-FOREX CONTROLS

CONTROLS WILL NOT AFFECT LIBERALISATION OF TELECOMS SECTOR, MOGGIE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 11 (Bernama) -- The liberalisation of the telecommunications sector which allows for up to 61 percent foreign equity in local firms will not be affected by the recent imposition of foreign exchange control measures, Energy, Telecommunications and Posts minister Datuk Leo Moggie, said.

"Our telecommunication licenses which have been opened to 61 percent foreign interest outlined in the liberalisation policy is still there despite these controls," he said.

On April 30, the government announced that it would allow a 61 percent foreign equity holding in local telecommunication companies (telcos) on a case-by-case basis, in a move to further boost the industry's efficiency and competitiveness.

Speaking at the Multimedia Asia98' press conference here today, Moggie said negotiations for proposed mergers or foreign parties buying stakes in local telcos were still on-going.

"Although nothing formal has been announced so far, I believe they are still talking," he said, when asked whether there was any possibility of another deal being clinched after the recent buying of 33 percent stake in Binariang Bhd for RM1.8 billion by British Telecom Plc.

Moggie also stressed that the government's intention to attract long-term investments will not change and would be further pursued, adding that what the government wanted is for people not to bring in "hot money" and then "short and speculate" in the local stock market for quick profits.

On the merger talk between Technology Resources Industries Bhd (TRI) and Time Telecommunications Sdn Bhd, he said the government would not interfere in the exercise, as "it was a purely commercial deal".

He said the ministry had yet to receive any official statements from the two parties.

Yesterday TRI's chairman and chief executive Tan Sri Tajudin Ramli said TRI and Time Telekom, which are discussing the details of the merger proposal, will submit it to the government once it had been finalised.

On the four-day Multimedia Asia Conference and Exhibition 98 (MMA) beginning Sept 29, Moggie said, "we will have the first "Virtual Commonwealth" conference at this year's MMA," he said.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would be the key speaker in one of the plenary sessions in the Virtual Commonwealth conference.

Other local Information technology (IT)- high-g geared personalities who will participate are Multimedia Development Corporation Sdn Bhd (MDC) executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Othman Yeop Abdullah and National Information Technology Council (NITC) secretary and Mimos Bhd president and chief executive officer, Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen.

Foreign speakers who have confirmed their participation are World Bank's president James Wolfensohn, European Union Commissioner for industrial affairs in IT and telecommunications Martin Bergemann and Dean of John F.Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University Dr Joseph Nye.

Moggie, will be a key speaker in the MMA 98's Opening Plenary Session: MSC - A testbed for Ideas and Ideals."

Hosted and organised by the NITC Secretariat, MMA 98's co-organisers are MIMOS Bhd, MDC, and Telekom Malaysia Bhd. -- BERNAMA

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