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Moggie to head new Multimedia Ministry (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. - The Energy, Telecommunications and Posts Ministry will be renamed Energy, Communications and Multimedia Ministry from Sunday, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad announced today.

To be headed by Datuk Leo Moggie, the Ministry would, among others, chart the long-term strategy of the communications and multimedia industry.

Dr Mahathir said it would take over the supervisory and policy aspects of broadcasting from the Information Ministry.

The new Ministry will come out with the organisational structure, outlining the new functions for communications and multimedia, regarding its interpretations and long-term strategy for the development of the industry.

Dr Mahathir told a Press conference at the Prime Minister's Department that the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission would also be established from Sunday with a launching grant of RM122 million.

Former Telekom Malaysia executive director Dr Syed Hussein Mohamed, 59, will be its first chairman.

Syed Hussein resigned as Telekom Malaysia executive director in June 1993 to set up an engineering consultancy but remained a non-executive director.

The Prime Minister said with the commission as the single regulatory authority for the converged industry of telecommunications, broadcasting and computing, the role of Jabatan Telekom Malaysia would be displaced.

Some of its technical functions will be taken over by the commission. However, since the Communications and Multimedia Act will only take effect from April 1 next year, Jabatan Telekom will only cease to exist then.

Moggie, Information Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Rahmat and Chief Secretary to the Government Tan Sri Abdul Halim Ali were also present at the Press conference.

Asked on the position of the Information Ministry, Dr Mahathir said it would continue to function as usual. Only its licensing role is affected, which in some cases, will be shared with the new Ministry.

Dr Mahathir said: "Non-information matters will be managed by this Ministry and the commission."

Elaborating, the Prime Minister said previously licences were issued by the Information Ministry.

"We found that this overlaps with the functions of Telecommunications Ministry (Energy, Posts and Telecommunications Ministry). Now that a new Ministry has been set up, it will take over this role.

"However, for broadcasting in the country, both Ministries will hold discussions before licences are issued," he added.

The Information Ministry will continue to be responsible for the policy development and implementation concerning the dissemination of government information, and for the management and operations of RTM.

The Prime Minister said the regulatory function of the Department of Posts would also be incorporated into the functions of the commission together with the responsibility of implementing the Digital Signature Act 1997.

This takeover will happen later as the Postal Services Act has to be amended, with the Treasury and Public Services Department to look into the organisational structure and the position of affected staff.

Several related bodies will be established, like the industry forum,
appeal tribunal and technical standards.

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