

## **Goodbye to the telegram**

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*OBSOLETE: Technology puts an end to 138-year-old service*

KUALA LUMPUR: THE telegram, which was part and parcel of Malaysian development and progress for more than a century, has finally called it a day.

The advent of the Internet and in particular, email, has rendered the service, which served the nation and its people faithfully for the last 138 years, obsolete.

Service provider Telekom Malaysia Berhad announced in an advertisement on Sunday it was ending the service that same day.

The first telegraph line was set up by the now defunct Department of Posts and Telegraph from Kuala Kangsar to Taiping in 1874. It signalled the beginning of an era of telecommunications in the country.

National Union of Telecommunication Employees president Mohd Jafar Abd Majid said telegram service had faced many challenges.

"Back in the 1970s and 1980s, the telegram was the only communication tool to send short text messages quickly, which made it one of the most important services in our service line.

"However, when fax machines, short-message services on mobile phones and email were born, the aging telegram slowly lost its former glory.

"So, because of these new tools, people stopped using the telegram," he said.

Mohd Jafar, who has worked at Telekom Malaysia for the past 30 years, said in its final years, telegram services were only used by older organisations.

"Old-timers stuck to the telegram because it ensured the message sent was received by the recipient. Services like faxes do not have this facility.

"As technology progressed, the telegram was simply unable to compete," he said.

Many countries have in recent years ceased their own telegram services.

In the United States, communications giant Western Union ceased all telegram and commercial messaging services on Jan 27, 2006.

In the United Kingdom, the telegram service formerly provided by British Telecom was sold in 2003 to an independent company, Telegrams Online, which currently provides the service as a retro greeting card or invitation.

However, in some countries including Japan, Belgium and Mexico, telegrams are still offered as a low-cost service for those who cannot afford or do not have access to the Internet.

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