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# HISTORYOF COMMUNICATION IN MALAYSIA (1940-2008)

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## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Second World War was, in some ways, one of the lowest points in Malaysia's history. Japanese forces landed on the north-east border of Malaya on 8 December 194 1 and, in one month, succeeded in establishing their control of both Peninsula Malaya and Sabah and Sarawak. On 15 March 1942, Singapore surrendered. Singapore was renamed Shonan and became the centre of a regional administrative headquarters that incorporated the Straits Settlements, and the Federated Malay States and Sumatra. Much like the British who had installed residents in the Malay ruling houses fifty years earlier, the Japanese appointed local governors to each state. The only difference was that this time, it was the Sultans who were placed in the positions of advisors. The Unfederated Malay States, Perlis, Kedah, Kelantan and Terengganu found themselves back under the sovereignty of Thailand in 1942, when Thailand declared war on Britain and the USA. Most large scale economic activities grounded to a halt during the period of the War. The production of tin which was already falling before the War stopped almost completely. People turned their occupation away from the cultivation of commercial crops, concentrating instead on planting rice and vegetables to ensure they did not go hungry. [1]

## 1.2 HISTORY BEGAN

For the telecommunication industry, all activity not specifically related to the war effort came to a stand still. A young telegraph operator identified only as E.R. joined what was then the Post and Telecoms Department in 1941. Writing about his experiences during the War, he relates that he resigned as a clerk earning $40 a month from the then Kuala Lumpur Municipality, and joined the Post and Telegraph Department as a Youth-in- Training earning 60 cents a day. He was posted to the Civil Radio Receiving Station in St Michael's Road, Singapore.

*"At St Michael's Singapore we had ship to shore service from the* 24 ,600*and 30meter bands and also point to point teleprinter circuits to the main telegraph office in Singapore. Besides this, the more experienced staff was used to receiving press news from the British official Wireless (BOW) London and from Chungking, the late Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek's capital in China. The news from China was in four figure code. Very often I was called upon to send press telegrams to Chungking. Some days before the outbreak of the Japanese invasion, Chungking Radio reported the movement of a Japanese Fleet down the South China Sea. Afew days later saw the sinking of the HMS Repulse and the "unsinkable" Prince of Wales. The SOS from the Repulse came loud and clear at St Michael's, even before the Naval Authorities were informed that the ships had gone under.*

*Not a month later, the Post and Telegraph Department came under the control of the Japanese. The Gunseikanbu ran the show. Back wewent for training, learning the Katakana Alphabet and its relevant Morse code. We utilised British perforators. Together with this the Japanese brought their own equipment, like Morse automatic transmitters and automatic receivers. Soon, circuits were extended to Bandung, Palembang, Pekan Baru, Medan and Bukit Tinggi in Sumatra.*

*So far as I could see, the Japanese had never heard of a teleprinter, soa machine was stripped to pieces, and put back together again, circuit diagrams drawn with Japanese identification and sent back to Japan. Before the British came*

*back, the Japanese version of this printer for Katakana alphabet was available in Shonanto (Singapore).*

*With rumours going round at the office, that bachelors were being sent to India and Ceylon with trans-receivers as contact men in the event of the Japanese invasion of these countries, I ran away to Kuala Lumpur. I joined the Domei news Agency at Jalan Parry, receiving news in romanized Japanese and English. The Domei were using ordinary radio receivers with oscillator waves for Morse signal reception. We discovered by accident that, by pulling out this particular valve, we could receive music and speech without the whining sound. So radio SEAC (South East Asia Command under Lord Mountbatten) was at our disposal. While one watched the door for any Japanese coming, another would tune Radio SEAC for the latest news. It was here that we heard what was really happening in the War, and we shared that news The best we could. The Potsdam Declaration was written down when we heard it· on Radio SEAC. We hid it in a vacuum flask, the glass part of a vacuum flask taken out, the piece of paper containing the details of the Declaration tucked safely inside, the glass put back and screwed on. The Domei version did not carry this news but the Japanese news carried it but then we didn't understand that. Hence, the English version was very important. The news spread like wildfire. Within a day or two, all of us at Domei were locked up in the office. Here we stayed for more than a week, then the Japanese surrendered with the falling of the Atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki."*

E.R. went back to work at St Michael's in Singapore after the War, still on a daily wage of $1 a day. (Whole text refer to[1])

## 1.3 AFTER WORLD WAR II

The end of the War brought out the best and worst in those who had survived. In 1945, the British Military Administration (BMA) arrived to find a nation in turmoil. One of the first acts of the BMA was to take over all radio transmissions from Penang, Kuala Lumpur, Seremban, Melaka and Singapore. Following the

departure of the Japanese, Indonesia unilaterally declared independence. There were factions who believed Malaya should follow suit. Others, seduced by Communist ideals, thought it should be the governing ideology of the new "Malaya". More rational voices realized that for Malaya to survive as a nation, a fragile peace would have to be negotiated between its people.

Britain had already decided that it where the time to prepare Malaya Independence's. The issue was working out the terms of this course of action. In the course of creating British Malaya prior to the war, interaction between the races was discouraged. Each group had its own target and mission in economic activity and lived within its own community. The war years had not helped the situation, as the Japanese too practiced a policy of divide and rule, with some communities faring better than others. It was an issue that would have to be addressed and resolved before Independence could be achieved.

The British were keen to hand over the running of the country in the shortest possible time. The political structure they proposed to implement was a unitary state which comprised the Federated and Unfederated States, Penang and Melaka under a central government called the Malayan Union. The Sultans would get to keep their positions but sovereignty would be transferred to the British Crown. Citizenship would be extended to all. The proposal was not well received. In the political field that followed, the Malayan Communist Party (MPC) decided that its only chance to ensure a Malaya with communist ideals was to fulfill on a course of armed insurrection.

In the middle of turmoil, the reorganization of the administration took priority.In 1946, the postal and telecommunication functions of the former Posts and Tele Department were split and the Telecommunication Department was created. In 1947 training centre was set up, known fondly as "Gracelyn" .This centre was to turn out many engineers and technicians over the years. To fulfill demand, it was expanded and rebuilt the 1960's at a new site in Jalan Semarak and name as Pusat Latihan Telekom.[1]

In 1951, the Broadcast Department added new item to its broadcast mission. Classified as “Emergency Services, the Broadcast Department", was tasked with winning the hearts and minds of the people. Programs in the form of interviews speeches, news, appeals, features and even drama was produced in a variety of languages to combat, communism. Radios, at the time, were government issue and placed in community listening centers.

Private ownership of radio sets was very rare because it was expensive and bulky. With the introduction of transistor radios and more powerful transmitters in the 1950’s, all the changes In 1952, Radio Sabah working in close association width the Post and Telegraph Department of Sabah began broadcasting news and announcement. In 1954,Radio Sarawak too took the airways producing programming Malay English, Chinese and Iban.Two more station were launched in 1958 and 1959 Radio Sarawak, in co-operate with Education Department, began experimenting with Educational Radio. The service was fully implemented in 1959. [1]

Through the 50’s, the telecommunication infrastructure that was destroyed during the War was put back into place. Thousands miles of cable and old exchanges were replaced.

## 1.4 METAMORPHOSIS

50th century show the positive progressed, it looked as if the war against communism was being won. The prices of commodities rose, bringing a new prosperity to the people. Political alliances were formed, with the First General Election being held in 1955.in 1956, the Reid Commission toured Malaya as part of the process of drafting constitution for an Independent Malaya .On 31 August 1957, Malaya became independent state, Million of Malayans around country attended the event live at Merdeka Stadium with co-operation between of the Telecoms and Broadcast Department. [1]

In 1960, The State of Emergency was lifted .With the wires and transmitters back in place The Telecoms Department prepared to further in technology. In 1959 the first microwave link was set

up between Kuala Lumpur and Singapore. A year later, international radio telephone services were implemented between Kuching, Singapore and Malaya.In1961, a study was carried out under the Colombo Plan to plan and implement the development of Subscriber Trunk Dialing (STD) services between Kula Lumpur and Singapore. [1]

By this time, discussions were taking place about the feasibility of the formation of Malaysia, which would consist of a joining of the states of Sabah and Sarawak, and Singapore with the newly Independent Malaya. On 16 September 1963, the new state of Malaysia was born. Indonesia protested the merger. In 1965, Singapore would leave to become an independent state .Through it all, the nation would be forced to defend itself against Indonesia who, in protest, mounted a program of military attacks and political propaganda under the name "Konfrontasi".

In 1960, at the request of the Cabinet, studies were carried out to assess the feasibility of the implementation of television. The Broadcast Department began to prepare itself for broadcast in a whole new medium .Work began on the construction of a studio with help by the Canadian Broadcast Commission, test transmissions were carried out. On 28 December 1963, Television Malaysia was officially launched by the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman.

Early transmissions consist mainly of news and current affairs programs in a forty-mile radius. The service was rolled out in stages and required the installation of more transmitters. By 1964, transmission had extended to the whole of the West Coast and finally Eastern states as well.

In 1964 The South East Asian Commonwealth(SEACOM) cable from Singapore to Jesselton(Kota Kinabalu) and Hong Kong was completed. Malaysia also invested $200 million in the SEACOM cable Project [1]. A troposcatter was also installed that connected Gunung Pulai(Johor) and Gunung Serapi(Kuching).It was only such system in this country allowing for simultaneous transmission of programs to Sabah and Sarawak. [1]

Unlike peninsular Malaya, post and telecommunications operated under 1 department in both Sabah and Sarawak. It was during this times that the functions were split, creating a Telecommunication Department (Sabah region) and Telecommunication Department (Sarawak region).Both department are absorbed into The Telecommunication Department in Malaya. By the end of the 60's, Malaysia had established itself as a nation with an adequate.

## 1.5 PLANING THE FUTURE

By 1970, Radio dan Televisyen Malaysia (RTM) was comfortably housed at its new premises at Angkasapuri,with two channel and radio station transmitting in Bahasa Melayu,English,a variety of Chinese dialect and Indian languages. Coverage of both TV and radio however was limited to the west coast states and the coastal area on the east coast in peninsular Malaysia. In April 1970, the 1st international standard satellite was officially operated .It was a major milestone for both broadcast and telecommunication industry[1]. It now possible to provide for overseas telephone call and services. The Earth station in Kuantan also made possible to television event live linked to satellite over the Indian Ocean. On 28 December 1971 RTM began television transmission to Sabah for 5hour, twice a week between 6pm-11pm through transmitter at Bukit Lawa,Layang-layang,Bukit Kapor,Bukit merah,Mount Silam and Mount Audrassey.Sarawak would see its 1st TV transmission from RTM only on 31 August 1975[1].Nation –wide TV transmission covering Peninsular, Sabah and Sarawak from Angkasapuri. Colour TV was launched officially on 28 December 1978 using 625 lines PAL colour system for all broadcast. Over the year RTM produced and importuned a variety of programs to cater to every strata of society, keeping its finger on the pulse of public taste and desire.

On 12 October 1984, Syarikat Telecom Malaysia Berhad (STMB) was incorporated. Operation was Jabatan Telekom Malaysia to STMB on the 1 Jan 1987 and changes name Telekom

Malaysia Berhad (Telekom Malaysia) in 1991[1].Telekom Malaysia introduced new services at a breathing pace. Telefax was closely followed by the introduction of packet switching technology allowing computer access to foreign database. In 1985 cellular radio technology became available nation-wide though the introduction of ATUR[1]. Meanwhile the introduction of Multi Access Radio services made telephone possible in the more remote parts of country .INTELSAT Business Services (IBS) was introduced in 1988 to industrial community in Kuala Lumpur and Penang providing high speed digital leased data transmission services between Malaysia and United State[1]. Another highlight in 1988 was the commissioning of the Kuantan-2A satellite Earth station costing RM27.7 million, the station incorporated the latest satellite design and technology..In august 1989,telemail, a computer –based electronic messaging service was launched with electronic mail service in both Bahasa Melayu and English[1]. This was followed in September 1989,by service 800 or Toll free services. In broadcasting TV3 became 1st private TV station channel launched on 1 June 1984,its broadcast live telecast of the Olympic Games held in Los Angeles [2].

In 1985 ,the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic System was established better known as MIMOS Berhad it was the sole provider of Internet services when Rangkaian Komputer Malaysia(RangKom) was introduced in1987 enabling all universities in Malaysia to be connected with the rest of the world[1]. Overwhelming response initiated a new program to be developed in 1991 called Joint Advanced Research Integrated Networking or Jaring. [1]

## 1.6 NO TURNING BACK

By the end 1991, Malaysian used prepaid cards and credit cards to make phone calls, made phone call from trains via ATURel Service, while those who travelling could call home via Toll free service that enable them to reverse charges. Corporate information Superhighway (COINS) was launched in1997[1].Based on the

fiber-optic backbones, COINS in a globally connected,fast,efficient,cost effective.high-capacity multimedia network which support multimedia applications with a capacity of up to 10mb per second to transmit voice data and images.Celcom(Malaysia) Sdn Bhd commenced operations in 1989 and offered a host of mobile services namely Celcom GSM digital (019),Celcom prepaid Mobile,Celcom Speek 019 prepaid and Celcom ART 900 analogue(010) mobile services. [3]Celcom GSM WAP mobile Internet C service,fixed line networks , multimedia and other value added services.Its current emphasis is on providing Mobility Solutions. Binariang Satellite .Systems Sdn Bhd owner operator of the Malaysia's 1st satellite system, MEASAT[1] .On 13 Jan 1996 MEASAT-1 was launched from Kourou,French Guiana with the hi-powered Ku –Band then MEASAT-2 in 14 November 1996[1].Both spacecraft provide highpowered C-band and KU-band digital capacity to meet the increasing Internet,Broadcasting and telecommunication needs of Malaysia and other countries within the Asian region.The MEASAT Satellite Control Centre (MSCC) is located in Pulau Langkawi,Kedah. [1]

Maxis Communications Berhad ,was established in 1993.Today, with the convergence of communications and multimedia, Maxis offers integrated communication and Internet-based solutions,though both fixed and mobile voice and data services. Time dotcom Berhad was incorporated as a public company on 11 December 1996 under the name of Time Telecommunication Holdings Berhad. Its network includes 3600km of terrestrial fibre optic cable including a main fibre optic route of 900km along North South Expressway (PLUS).TIMECel 017 has international roaming facilities 66 countries with more than 110 international networks and also has internet services known as TimeNet. Initially known as Mutiara Swisscom Bhd,Digi.Com Berhad launched fully digital mobile phone services in1995.Digi was the first mobile phone operator to offer the Stock Exchanges alert via name Digi StockAlert,other services also offered including pre-paid and Automatic International

Roaming.In year 2000 Digi formed a strategic alliance with Telenor International AS,and went on to develop a host of services including phone banking using STK platforms, an agreement with Yahoo! Asia to introduce WAP services and signed an RM800 million contract with Ericsson (M) Sdn Bhd for expansion of Digi existing GSM 1800 network and to boost both coverage and quality of services including supply and implementation of GPRS technology. On December 2000 Digi introduced mobile internet portal named D'juice.

On broadcast front,the latest entry into market is Natseven Sdn Bhd or NTV7 was launched nation-wide on 7 April 1998 [1].NTV7 broadcast on the UHF frequency band and offer a combination of locallyproduced and foreign programs. Radio services too continue to flourish. The two biggest players in terms of private radio services are Measat Radio Communications Sdn. Berhad (which operates three radio stations namely MY, Hitz, and Light and Easy) and Maestro Broadcast Sdn. Berhad which operates Era and Mix FM which together accounted for over 60% of revenues by radio broadcasters in 2000 [1]. The next biggest player is Radio Redifussion followed by Kristal Harta Sdn. Berhad which operates CATS Radio. Other radio broadcasters include Radio Lebuhraya Sdn. Berhad (Time Highway Radio) and Suara Johor Sdn. Berhad (Best 104).

Telecommunications and broadcast industries in Malaysia at the beginning of a new millennium remains alert to developments and advances taking place around the world. Effects of globalization are that capital and investment will go where profits and productivity are highest. Programs have been put in place to raise internet access rates outside urban areas, but the success of these will depend on more than just getting computers into rural homes. Through the late 90's, plans were made to change the regulatory structure of the multimedia and communications industry In 1999, The Telecommunications Act (1950) and the Broadcasting Act (1988) were repealed, with the coming into force of a new regulatory framework and structure in the form of the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Act (1998). [1]

The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Act (1998) break new ground by being the first of its kind in the world. Based on the concept of a "technology-neutral" regime, the Act embodies the principles of transparency, adherence to time-lines, accountability and self-regulation, and to that end, provides for economic, technical, consumer protection and social regulation. The Act provides, amongst other things, for the issuance of licenses on a horizontal (as opposed to the classic vertical) structure. Four classes of licenses are provided for Network Facilities Providers (NFP) for owners of satellite earth stations, broadband fiber optic cables, telecommunication lines and exchanges, radio communication transmission equipment, mobile communication base stations and broadcasting towers and equipment.

Network Service Providers (NSP) for providers of basic connectivity and bandwidth to support a variety of applications. Applications Service Provider (ASP) for providers of particular functions such as voice services, data services, content based services, electronic commerce and other transmission services. Content Applications Service Providers (CASP) which is a special subset of applications service providers including traditional broadcast services and newer services such as online publishing and information services. [1]

Pursuant to the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission Act(1998),the Malaysian Communication and Multimedia Commission was formed to take on the role of licensor and regulator and to a facilitate, through the creation and implementation of rules and policies, the convergence of telecommunication broadcast and on line services with the objective and fulfilling the ten National Policy Objectives. [1]

Planning for 3G or 3rd Generation Mobile in Malaysia commenced in May 2000. The Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission ("Commission') had, in September 2000, consulted various licensees under the Communications and Multimedia Act 1998 (CMA) on the proposed approach to 3G in Malaysia [4]. Although 3G telecommunication in Malaysia is still

new, there are potential of increasing in demand for 3G. In Malaysia, main telecommunication providers, Maxis and Celcom are given the 3G license from goverment.3G service providers have widened their coverage through out the whole peninsular by constructing many infrastructures for 3G. These entire infrastructure are very expensive and at the same time risen up their investment. For these reason, the 3G charge to the consumers are very expensive.

The use of 3G telecommunication technology in Malaysia is usually use by the higher income consumer. This is because of the expensive 3G gadgets and rates of the 3G charges by the telecommunication provider. At the mean time, 3G service in Malaysia are commonly use for downloading data, web browsing, MMS and etc. because it is more faster than the General Packet Radio Service commonly known as GPRS.

The latest program that in government plan is National Broadband Plan(NBP)[5]. which plans for nationwide roll out of high speed broadband services, wireless as well as wired/fixed, which together which will form one of the main “pillars” ofthe government’s MyICMS 886 strategy.

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