Boonserm resigns as MCOT director

...as Muan Chon threatens lese majeste suit

PROFESSOR Boonserm Veasakul, nominated on Wednesday as director of the Mass Communications Organisation of Thailand, withdrew from official duty following a lese majeste accusation yesterday.

Boonserm tendered his resignation citing personal reasons yesterday to Prime Minister Anan Paphum, who said the development was not linked to the lese majeste allegations.

Anan, who oversees the MCOT, named Public Relations Department deputy director-general Manit Wuthiarat to fill in for Boonserm, who had been acting director for 10 months.

Muan Chon Party leader Chalerm Yothavron told Parliament yesterday he would take legal action against Boonserm for the remarks made at a seminar this month which, he claimed, slandered the monarchy.

The Thai Bar Association also threatened to seek court action against the government.

Scene:

Boonserm

"I don't know if Prof Boonserm personally has been implicated in any misconduct. However, this development is part of the continuing investigation into possible wrongdoing.

"The Thai government has a duty to ensure that all citizens are treated fairly and justly. Any allegations of wrongdoing should be thoroughly investigated and if there is evidence of wrongdoing, action should be taken accordingly.

"I urge the Thai government to investigate these allegations thoroughly and take appropriate action, if necessary. This is not only in the best interest of the Thai government but also in the best interest of the Thai people."

Muan Chon, a former military officer, has been a vocal critic of the Thai government. He has previously been accused of making lese majeste remarks, but was acquitted in court.
Boonserm to face lese majeste investigation

INTERIOR Minister Prawit Wongsuwon told the media yesterday that investigation into allegations of lese majeste against former Mass Communications of Thailand acting director Boonserm Veesaksiri will proceed.

Prawit said the police would look for people with taped recordings of the statements Dr Boonserm was alleged to have made at a seminar.

The minister denied the Government had forced Dr Boonserm to resign from the post of director because of the Opposition's complaints, saying the allegations were a result of political competition.

"There seem to be several less serious allegations at present, and there are several incidents Opposition parties can use to ammunition against the government," he said.

On Thursday, Muang Chon leader Thaworn Wuthawong told Parliament he would initiate legal action against Dr Boonserm for remarks he claimed contradicted the monarchy.

Pol Maj Chalerm also threatened to pursue the Opposition if the Government appointed Dr Boonserm Moot director.

Dr Boonserm, who was acting director for 10 months, tendered his resignation citing personal reasons to Paiboon’s Office Minister Arun Pampaing, who said the development was not linked to the lese majeste accusations.

Police Department director Gen Narong Mahanond has appointed a panel of investigators to look into the lese majeste allegations.

On Monday, former Thai ex-cabinet Minister Prayut Chonlertong, who has been given compensation for his resignation, issued a statement saying he had not been involved in the investigation.

Dr Boonserm was the victim of a group of people who had spread false information and they had not investigated the facts.

They called on the Government to look into irregularities at the agency and take positive action against any wrongdoers.

In a brief farewell message, Dr Boonserm said he had been happy in his job for 10 months and had a new role in acting director, and he urged the workers to cooperate with his successor.

Dr Boonserm handed over his job to Public Relations Department deputy director Moot Vorabudhavong, who will take over on a temporary basis.

About 200 Moot employees waved off Dr Boonserm’s car to bid him farewell as he boarded the bus for his new post.

The Moot employees youth wing said Dr Boonserm had been a good leader and they hoped he would continue to be a good leader.

Boonserm made a new passport and flight ticket to London subject to the meeting of the government's cabinet.