

04/08/1997

Be bold and venture into new areas, PM tells film companies

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PETALING JAYA, Sun. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight called on Malaysian film companies to be bold and to discard the attitude that the world owed them a living.

He said they could not insist that the Government fight for the film companies on their terms when the Government had provided various facilities and incentives.

"We are living in an era of the survival of the fittest. For example the Multimedia Super Corridor or MSC. It has no precedent. We have no source of reference," he said at the Malam Seniman at Sunway Lagoon Resort Hotel here tonight.

Similarly, Dr Mahathir said Malaysian film companies must be daring and venture into new areas. And after getting into them, they should market their films aggressively.

He said the world was beginning to have confidence in Malaysia where 90 companies had applied for MSC status.

"It is the same for films. Hollywood films are leading the industry not because of big budgets but because of aggressive marketing to every part of the world," he said.

As such, he said one must become successful entrepreneurs to produce successful and quality films because in business there was also the art of negotiation.

"We must possess the art of negotiations. In my view, people involved in the film industry in the country must foster good relations with everyone involved in the industry," he said.

Dr Mahathir said that to ensure those involved in the film industry received protection for their creative work, the Government through the Multimedia Bill of Guarantees had, among others, made it a condition that the MSC would become a Regional Leader in Intellectual Property Protection and Cyberlaws.

In this respect, in the Government's efforts to develop the MSC, film producers should grab the opportunities since there was now a guarantee that their work would be protected.

"We can make films based on more concrete issues but many films produced in the country were based on love themes," he said.

He said films which won international awards did not choose love as their major theme but rather that of the society.

Dr Mahathir cited as examples The English Patient and Forrest Gump where the issues portrayed were universal and not just based on a love story.

"There is no need for us to copy films produced in the west including unsuitable culture portrayed in these films. At the Cannes Film Festival last May, an entry from Iran The Taste of Cherry won the highest award, portraying only the story of a man in search of human compassion," he said.

He said films produced in the country could have Malaysian identities but the issues to be highlighted must be universal.

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