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PM-Hollywood

PM INVITES HOLLYWOOD TO USE MSC TO LOCALISE IN ASIA

By: K.C.Leong

LOS ANGELES, Jan 15 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad Tuesday invited Hollywood to use Malaysia's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) to connect its creativity with the conditions necessary to localise entertainment relevant to much of Asia and the rest of the world.

Addressing entertainment industry leaders here, the Prime Minister said Asians would increasingly prefer entertainment that is localised in its languages, myths, characters, music, allusions and locations.

Dr Mahathir, who is on the first leg of his week-long visit to California to promote the MSC, said that among other things, the MSC would provide the world's best environment for multimedia and digital entertainment. He will leave for Santa Clara Wednesday and visit Tokyo next week.

The MSC could be the perfect place to experiment with creating the world's first multicultural content centre for digital entertainment, he said.

"Hollywood is the undisputed movie capital of the world. Working together, it may be possible to expand this into other realms such as games or interactive entertainment," he added at the function held at the Beverly Hills Hotel.

"Although technology and information will move more and more freely over the coming decades, the scarce resource will always be creativity. Since you have this in abundance, I hope we can connect and use some of it to define the frontier of multicultural content creation in the Digital Age."

The prime minister said although new technology was changing the ways the entertainment industry worked, through it all creativity not only remained a need but would actually become a more valuable asset and all content creation was "heavily concentrated within a 30-mile radius of this hotel".

Dr Mahathir believed that Hollywood would continue to be the major player in Information Technology Age of computer generated entertainment and its new offspring, edutainment.

However, he added: "Maintaining your global dominance will probably require you to diversify some other elements of content creation to other cultural centres around the world.

"Today's entertainment is almost entirely American in its cultural content. The characters are American, their problems are American, their dialogue is American.

"Most of the world experience this entertainment at a relatively superficial level. They really don't understand a lot of the subtleties in the better stories."

Dr Mahathir said although this might be enough today because of glitz, special effects and high production values, technology would soon make these advantages disappear because digital entertainment based on action, special effects, etc could be developed anywhere and digital action heroes would become more and more realistic.

He added that as developing countries became more affluent they would want more local content for their entertainment and this was already being seen in music and television in Asia and sooner or later the same trend would be visible in movies and computer games.

This was because people anywhere wanted to identify with what they get

entertained with and link it with their own material aspirations. Later as they become more secure through their success, they would be looking for deeper fulfilment.

"They are searching for more meaning, and this requires a cultural context that goes well beyond America's pop culture," the prime minister said.

In order to stay globally dominant in the 21st century, digital entertainment leaders should be networked with multicultural content centres, he added.

Dr Mahathir said Asia's rich cultures rooted in Confucianism, Islam and Hinduism could be a deep source of new ideas for content while technology could allow new characters to be electronically created that embodied these ideas touch people deeply.

In this respect, he said, Malaysia was a truly multicultural country where the Confucian, Malay and Indian races thrived, remained separate yet somehow interacted with one another.

The MSC, located in the "cultural heart of Asia", would be truly a world first, the careful creation of an area with the infrastructure, laws, policies and practices which would enable companies to explore the Information Age without any of the usual constraints which frustrated them, he added.

He said Malaysia and its government was taking a single-minded approach to developing the country using the new tools offered by the Digital Age and the MSC was a pilot project for harmonising the entire country with the global forces shaping the Information Age.

Phase 1 involved making the MSC a success by learning from Malaysia's partners, phase 2 would link up with other "islands of excellence" within Malaysia while phase 3 involved making all of Malaysia a Multimedia Super Corridor connected to other smart regions around the world, he added.

He said that in order to meet the needs of leading multimedia and entertainment companies Malaysia was offering a 10-point Multimedia Bill of Guarantees to all companies with MSC status.

The guarantees are that Malaysia would provide a world-class physical and information infrastructure, allow unrestricted hiring and entry of foreign knowledge workers in the MSC with no employment restrictions, would ensure freedom of ownership of IT companies located in the MSC;

Allow freedom of sourcing capital globally for MSC infrastructure and freedom to borrow funds anywhere, would provide competitive financial incentives, the MSC would become a regional leader in intellectual property protection and cyberlaws, would ensure no censorship of the Internet, the MSC would have globally competitive telecommunications tariffs;

Malaysia would tender key MSC infrastructure contracts to leading companies willing to use the MSC as their regional hub, and would provide a high-powered implementation agency (the Multimedia Development Corporation) to act as an effective "one-stop shop" to ensure the MSC met company needs.

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