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PM woos Hollywood entertainment wizards

Mustapha Kamil in Los Angeles

LOS ANGELES, Wed: Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is here to promote the country's Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC), yesterday came face to face with Hollywood's entertainment wizards.

He merged factors in outlook of the world's entertainment industry and potentials to be offered by the MSC to a group of Beverly Hills entertainment and community leaders at a luncheon here.

He said while Hollywood remains as the world's entertainment capital, it would probably have to search for ways to diversify contents of its creations from being just American-based to include other cultures of the world.

The Prime Minister said Hollywood's production is experienced in other parts of the world only at superficial levels, for they do not understand plenty of the subtleties in the better Hollywood stories.

He pointed out that this may be enough today since Hollywood has been able to plug what it lacks from others' point of view with its amazing special effects, glitz and high production values. However, technology will take away these advantages because matters such as special effects can be developed anywhere, while digitally-developed action heroes may become more realistic in future.

Outlining what the future may look like, the Prime Minister said increasingly affluent developing nations will want more local content for their entertainment.

"The themes may remain universal but Asians will increasingly prefer entertainment more localised in its language, myths, characters, music, allusions and locations," he said.

He added that this is becoming visible in the music scene and that later, Asians would want entertainment that fulfil more requirements than as mere forms of escapism.

"They are searching for a meaning and this requires a cultural context that goes beyond America's pop culture," he said.

To maintain dominance, entertainment leaders of the 21st century must network with other cultural centres for content creations and the best results would come from combining Hollywood's ingenuity and personalities of each of the major world cultures.

In digital-based entertainment, he said, technology would enable the electronic creation of new characters that will embody and touch deeply those outside of Hollywood.

The creativity of making stories and characters come to life on computer screens, for example, will become especially valuable. In this respect, Dr Mahathir went on to say that three-dimensional computer games may be written by faceless programmers in several countries and who may never meet each other.

Asia's major cultures have a rich history that can become good sources for new ideas in contents. The creativity part, he said, would remain as Hollywood's forte for the quality is of abundance here.

The Prime Minister then turned to the MSC, saying that it represents a perfect place for Hollywood to experiment creating the world's first multi-cultural content centre for digital entertainment.

Malaysia, he said, can be described as in the cultural heart of Asia and being multi-racial and harmonious, there is no better place to connect Hollywood's creativity with conditions that would localise the

entertainment relevant to much part of the Asian continent than using the MSC as a platform.

He then went on to describe attractions within the MSC, including its ultra-modern physical and soft infrastructures combining intelligent buildings, adequate laws, modern telecommunication facilities, high-speed land transportation, a modern airport and environmentally conducive living conditions.

Answering questions later, Dr Mahathir said the MSC idea is generally accepted by Malaysians, adding that the nation realises the need to initially bring in foreign expertise while preparing themselves to receive the new technology brought in.

On fundings for the project, he said, much of it have been undertaken since the KLCC and KLIA projects, the two major components of the MSC is now being constructed.

"There is no problem in funding as the private sector in Malaysia is willing to undertake the rest of the physical infrastructure building in the MSC," he said.

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