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Dub local films into foreign languages, urges Dr M

Fadzil Ghazali

THE movie and drama industry should consider dubbing local works into foreign languages to exploit export opportunities, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"Previously, we thought that local productions were only watched by Malaysians. But now, we discover that local productions, when properly dubbed into foreign languages, can be exported.

"This shows there is potential... this type of export will help to expand our markets," he told reporters in Kuala Lumpur after visiting HVD Entertainment's new studios yesterday.

Dr Mahathir said locally-made movies, when exported, will also help to educate the audience abroad about Malaysia, and at the same time promote the country as a tourist destination.

"Foreign viewers will get a chance to glimpse Malaysia's scenic locations when they watch our productions. Those, who earlier knew nothing about Malaysia, may want to visit the country," he added.

When asked whether it is viable for small players in the movie and drama industry to merge in view of the current economic slowdown, Dr Mahathir said there are some of them who have already merged but in very limited areas.

He expressed the hope that more in the industry should consider merging as it will help reduce operating costs, while at the same time promote expansion of ideas and expertise.

"If an entity attempts to have all the equipment of a comprehensive production house on its own, the company's operating costs will be too high. I noticed that the equipment at HVD is sophisticated, and I am sure they are expensive.

"Therefore, if the players could cooperate, it will be for the better. Maybe, they could compete as far as movies or works are concerned but it is better to share facilities," he added.

On some local movie makers' preferences for using foreign consultancy services in their productions, Dr Mahathir said, "If we expand our markets, then demand for local movies will also increase and all the facilities needed for movie production can be established within the country.

"The Government encourages export activities as it will help earn foreign exchange."

Bernama reports: HVD Entertainment Bhd expects to generate an income of RM35 million in 1998 compared to RM28 million earned last year, said its managing director Sebastian K.L. Foo.

The TV production company expects its new studio in Cheras to generate RM1 million in annual income in the first and second year.

This amount will increase by not less than RM5 million in the next three to five years, Foo told reporters after an official visit by Dr Mahathir to the company's RM40 million studio complex in Kuala Lumpur.

The complex is in its first phase. Its outdoor studio features three main location themes - a nostalgic square, a Malay village and a modern city.

Phase two comprises a three-storey building which will house the Human Resources Department and a 20-storey building which will serve as the company's headquarters.

HVD's fully-integrated production facilities will cost a total of RM140

million, Foo said.

HVD Entertainment, which is 30 per cent owned by Ministry of Finance Inc and the balance by Kurnia Padu Sdn Bhd, hopes to get listed in the Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange before the year 2000.

The company wants to produce more TV programmes this year and is continuously searching for export markets. Last year, it produced 2,700 TV programmes.

Foo said HVD's international distribution network is well in place and exports of HVD programmes are worth US\$2 to US\$3 million (US\$1 = RM4.54) a year.

Currently, HVD's drama and telemovies are distributed to China, Indonesia, Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, the US, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand.

It will soon expand its coverage to include India, Pakistan, South Korea, Africa, West Asia, the Latin/Spanish markets and the ex-Soviet Union.

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