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Mahathir-Film

PM SUGGESTS MERGER OF LOCAL FILM COMPANIES TO WIDEN MARKET

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 22 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today suggested that the local production companies merge to pool their capital and expertise towards producing higher quality films for the export market.

The prime minister said that in a local market which was so small and limited, the move was an appropriate one and in line with the government's priority now.

"Previously we thought that Malay shows, for example, were viewed by Malays only but (now) we find that Malay shows from Malaysia appear just as natural when dubbed in foreign languages.

"So exports like these will widen our market and this means that we have potential which we did not see before," he said at a news conference after visiting the indoor and outdoor studios of HVD Entertainment, a local production company, in Cheras, near here.

The prime minister spent over an hour at the RM150 million studio complex which is of international standard and the first of its kind in Southeast Asia.

Dr Mahathir said he was impressed with the progress of the 17-year-old company which had proven that local films could penetrate the foreign markets if they were of quality and dubbed.

"I just saw the dubbing into Spanish for marketing in Latin America. This shows that stories from our country can be accepted by foreigners.

"At the same time they get to view the Malaysian scenery and maybe this can attract tourists from other countries which previously did not know Malaysia very well," he said.

Thirty per cent of HVD Entertainment's equity is held by Khazanah Holdings, the government's investment arm, 30 per cent each by its executive director Haji Adnan Zakaria and managing director Sebastian Foo and the rest by other parties.

Dr Mahathir said a merger could also enable the local film production companies to save costs in terms of utilisation of equipment and expertise and they need not go abroad for these resources.

"I think that if we widen our market to sell abroad, our needs will increase and we can have all the equipment needed in our own country.

Then the local companies need not send their films for processing abroad and make hefty foreign payments, he said when asked to comment on some local production houses which still use studios and equipment overseas for final processing of their productions.

Acknowledging that sophisticated equipment and expertise were costly to acquire, he said that was why he was suggesting the merger for the local companies to pool their resources.

"They have merged but the progress is limited. I hope that all parties can merge so that they can use the expertise available," he said, referring to several existing local film production consortiums.

Dr Mahathir said that if the local production houses chose not to merge, they should think of ways to mutually benefit from the exchange of the equipment and facilities available. -- BERNAMA

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