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Boost for MSC's entertainment village

CYBERJAYA, Sat. - Cutting-edge technology coupled with Malaysia's innate beauty will boost the Multimedia Super Corridor's entertainment village as a movie-making destination, a Hollywood insider said today.

"It's not difficult to do a selling job on Malaysia because you've got so much to offer to our industry," the Motion Picture Association's Asia Pacific senior vice-president Michael V. Connors said.

"There is a remarkable richness of natural settings here.

"You've got the East Coast, beautiful pinnacle mountains around Ipoh, and Langkawi, Penang and Malacca ... you could list areas that are very unique and diverse, yet Malaysian."

Connors said these locations were all bound by the necessary infrastructure, an excellent road system and comfortable living standards that would interest movie studios.

He also said the entertainment village, to include a US\$60 million (RM228 billion) post-production studio, was being established at a perfect time when the movie-making industry was changing its methods of filming and delivering movies to the public.

"What we have to grapple with in a big, established, industry like Hollywood is how our way of producing pictures is increasingly digital while delivering movies is increasingly being done electronically or via satellite.

"Here you don't have the clutter of habits and technology that's outdated.

"You can start fresh and build on what is relevant and current now."

Connors said he was impressed with what he had seen and heard during the three-day International Advisory Panel meeting and would promote the entertainment village's concept and potential to Hollywood studios.

The Motion Picture Association groups some of the biggest movie studios in the world.

They include Walt Disney, Fox, Universal, Paramount, Warner Brothers and MGM, which deliver products for cinemas, video and television.

Although filming outside the United States is nothing new to the studios, they have increasingly been farming out post-production work, such as the addition of special effects, overseas.

One notable area of growth is Australia, where Fox set up a studio in 1998 and where director George Lucas has reportedly agreed to film the next two episodes of the "Star Wars" saga.

When asked how Malaysia's entertainment village could compete with such destinations, Connors said that besides the availability of high-tech infrastructure and locales, Malaysia also had a diverse pool of local talent.

"You can get actors and actresses from the country.

"Michelle Yeoh (who made her Hollywood debut in the James Bond flick "Tomorrow Never Dies") certainly hit the world by storm, and I'm sure there are a lot of other Michelle Yeohs and maybe a few P. Ramlees and who knows what else here."

Connors also cited Malaysia's rich human resources with its diverse ethnicity and increasingly national experience with thousands of students going abroad to study overseas.

"You've got a hybrid experience here, a creative mixture with enormous potential for entertainment."

Connors added that during his one-on-one meeting with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today, he had promised to be a "salesperson" for the entertainment village.

(END)