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Mahathir-Entrapment

MAHATHIR DISPLEASED OVER DISTORTED VIEWS OF MALAYSIA IN MOVIE

KUALA LUMPUR, June 22 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today expressed his displeasure over the distorted view of Malaysia in the movie, "The Entrapment", which was filmed partly in Kuala Lumpur.

He said the distorted view of the Petronas Twin Towers would make movie audiences in the rich countries conclude that Malaysia was one of the developing countries which wasted public funds, perhaps even foreign aid, on useless grandiose monuments.

"And they of course would not want to come and see the tallest buildings in the world.

"I really cannot understand why we need to distort and harm when we can be charitable without any additional cost to ourselves," he said in his opening remark at the Integrated Strategic Communication Bullseye (ISCB) Worldwide Partners' 1999 Annual World meeting, here.

Saying that the urge to distort and misinform seemed irresistible to some people, he added that Malaysia was horrified to find that the Kuala Lumpur twin towers, the tallest buildings in the world, were pictured as rising from the slums of Melaka, some 150km away.

The twin towers did not rise from the slums as depicted in the internationally acclaimed movie starring Sean Connery of the James Bond fame and Catherine Zeta Jones.

Dr Mahathir said the twin towers rose in the middle of a modern city and were surrounded by 20 hectares of gardens where the people enjoyed their evenings and weekends, people who were well-fed, well-clothed and probably well-heeled as well.

Mentioning the case to drive home his point that such was the treatment Malaysia was getting from the Western media, he said the 50-odd participants of the meeting themselves certainly knew that the depiction in the movie was far from being true.

However, Dr Mahathir acknowledged that Malaysia had been going through a period of economic instability accompanied by a degree of political turmoil resulting from the removal of former deputy prime minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim from his office.

He also acknowledged that there were street demonstrations that turned ugly, but, he said, they were only confined to Kuala Lumpur and after a week, the number of people joining them and the frequency diminished.

Dr Mahathir said the participants of the meeting could see for themselves that Kuala Lumpur was now its usual bustling self, the shopping complexes were full of people, the construction work was almost back to pre-economic turmoil days and everyone was busy contributing to the country's wealth.

"This is the true picture. But as you yourselves know, this is not the impression you got when you read the media reports or the TV reports before you came here," he said.

He said it was the duty of everyone to be truthful about the goods and services they sold and even politicians must ensure that or they too would face the wrath of the courts and the voters.

On advertising, he believed people in the advertising business were careful about what they help to promote as they did not want to mislead the consumers, who, he said, were literate and educated and could not be taken for a ride.

The prime minister said advertising was absolutely necessary for the rapid growth of an economy and they must serve not just the client but also the consumers by ensuring that nothing was claimed that was not reasonably accurate.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad to note that some partners of the ICSB were most helpful in assisting it to undertake its "Malaysia: Bullish on Bouncing Back" international campaign last year to try to halt the sliding confidence in Malaysia's ability to recover economically.

He commended the participants for letting their wisdom prevail and for coming here to experience for themselves what Malaysia was all about in spite of their initial skepticism, anxiety and even fear, after hearing and reading about Malaysia from the so called "free-press" coverage of Malaysia.

The five-day meeting ending Friday is being attended by members of the Board of Directors of Worldwide Partners World Meeting representing the largest network of independent and owner-managed advertising agencies from all over the world.

-- BERNAMA

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