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They all want to be movie `extras`

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THERE must be an aspiring actor in everyone, judging from the overwhelming response from people in Ipoh at the recently-held auditions for "extras" in 20th Century Fox's new movie Anna And The King.

More than 6,000 hopefuls flocked to test their luck, according to Farang Films Ltd's first assistant director, Mahathir Tahir. Farang Films is the local company handling the hiring of extras for Hollywood's Anna and the King currently on location here.

Mahathir indicated that extras will also be involved in filming in other locations in Perak. For instance, more than 500 will be seen in parts as villagers in the green and scenic padi fields of Kampung Ewa, Langkawi.

At least 20 girls have roles as special feature extras for specific shoots, such as the ladies in the court, and concubines.

The company also scouted for caucasians, particularly as stand-ins for Jodie Foster, and for Louis, (Anna's son). Apparently, a girl was preferred for Louis, as it was difficult to find local boys who were short in stature.

The stand-ins for Foster are of medium build (about 160cm tall) while those for Chow Yun Fatt, who is 175cm tall, are around the same height and skin tone.

Though the "real stars" will be in front of the cameras mainly, life is no breeze for the stand-ins as they are expected to be there on the set full-time when the actors and actresses are being made-up or dressed.

There will be two more male stand-ins covering for other actors and actresses besides the main characters.

Mahathir said those who have already been signed up come from all walks of life, including farmers, students, pensioners, workers, and university students.

Besides this, the navy has also agreed in principle to lend its seamen, to be filmed as oarsmen for the royal barge. The royal barge is expected to carry 48 oarsmen, four guards, pilots and captains, besides royalty.

Mahathir said boats from the east coast and Sabah/Sarawak had been scrutinised before being selected for the shoots.

Farang Films also hired extras at Ipoh's Kinta City.

Elsewhere in Perak, the filming locations will be at Kuala Kangsar, Tasek Chenderoh, Parit, Gopeng, Gua Tempurung and Clearwater Sanctuary in Batu Gajah.

Gua Tempurung's shoot will be an aerial view of the elephant procession, while the shoot in Batu Gajah will be at Kellie's Castle (a night scene), and at Parit, the penghulu's house will be used to depict a colonial setting.

At Clearwater, a 16-storey palace of the Siamese King Mongkut, will be reconstructed in detail, and a steamer set in place at the lake, to recreate the actual Thai scenery at the time.

In Langkawi, the shooting of the scene is expected to be at Pantai Kok, near Kampung Ewa, where the royal summer palace is located.

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