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First national  
film project made  
to compete  
internationally

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**PETALING JAYA, Sun:** The struggles of a teenage girl during the Japanese occupation of Malaya will be focus of the first national film project, currently in its pre-production stage.

*Embun* named after the principal character' is jointly undertaken by Filem Nkgara Malaysia and the National Film Development Corp (Finas).

Scriptwriter Rohiman Haroon, 40, said shooting for the feature film has begun, with award-winning actress and director Erma Fatima at the helm.

"*Embun* portrays the struggles of a 17-year-old girl during the Japanese occupation of Malaya in the 1940s," he said.

Her story begins when she gets into a romantic liaison with a Japanese army officer, Koishi, after her freedom fighter brother, Bayu, is caught by the Japanese.

The plot thickens when it is revealed that Koishi's biological father was a Malay, while the man who married his mother was a Japanese spy.

The film, launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad on Thursday, is expected to have a star-studded cast.

Actors Umi Aida, Rosyam Nor, Azean Irdawaty and Hani Mohsin are said to be interested in the project.

Rohiman said a unique aspect of the film is that all the characters will be speaking in their own language. For example, Koishi will be talking in Japanese.

He said it took six months to write the script because a lot of research

had to be done to get the exact feel and details of the period before and during the Japanese occupation.

High hopes have been pinned on the film as it is being made with the intention of competing in international film competitions such as the Sundance Film Festival and the Cannes Film Festival.

"This film is expected to pave the way for the production of more artistic and meaningful films by the local film industry. We need to reeducate our film viewers to appreciate such good movies, like *Jogho*," he said.

*Embun*, originally titled *Titisan Air Mata Embun*, won the second prize in the Finas-Scriptwriters Association of

Malaysia (SWAM) script-writing competition in 1999.

Rohiman also won the first prize in the same competition for his work, *Saga*, and last year, he won the third prize in the competition for his work, *Lagu Untuk Vincent Van Gogh*.

He said various directors have expressed interest in his winning scripts but besides *Embun*, none has been turned into a film yet, because of lack of funding.

"I hope the local film industry will open its doors to talented scriptwriters and their serious work," he said.

Rohiman said there is a shortage of scriptwriters in the country as producers have to double up the writers and directors of local films.