

17/02/2003

PM: Films can help promote good values

By Sheridan Mahavera

KUALA LUMPUR, Sun. - The film industry has the potential to help lessen violence in society by promoting good values in their films.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that it was important for the industry to realise its influence on society and promote good values to help reduce violence.

Speaking at the launch of the Kuala Lumpur World Film Festival here tonight, he said films that did not show violence but were nevertheless entertaining should be popularised, as films could influence culture and behaviour.

Dr Mahathir added that violence in films had created a society which accepted violence as part of daily life, to the point that people resorted to violence at the slightest provocation.

"There is hardly a film that does not show violence these days. These films have an effect on our society and values. There are many crude scenes in these films which influence young, formative minds, just when they are developing their value systems," he said.

He added that the effect of films on children especially, was such that there were cases where some children attempted to fly just because they saw their counterparts flying in the films.

"We live in a violent age. Everywhere we look we see violence and oppression in daily life. Innocent people are being killed in wars.

"Everywhere we read about children shooting their parents. There seems to be no end to the escalation of violence. We believe that this is due to the violence and drug abuse popularised in the media."

"That is why this festival is dedicated to films which do not show violence. Today, war is about to break out. Innocent people will die. In ancient times it was the warriors who were killed in wars. Now even people not connected to the war will be killed."

He stressed that it was against this backdrop that the film industry could perhaps influence those who wanted to resort to violence.

"We want to reward those who avoid showing violence in their films. We hope that this can help develop better values in society."

Dr Mahathir hoped the festival would be an annual event.

Among those present at the launching were his wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, Information Minister Tan Sri Khalil Yaakob and Deputy Information Minister Datuk Zainuddin Maidin.

At the launching, Dr Mahathir presented tokens of appreciation to representatives of countries who are participating in the festival.

About 3,000 people who watched the launching at Dataran Merdeka were treated to colourful shows and a short feature on acting legends of the Malaysian silver screen.

The film festival, which is being held in conjunction with the 13th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, will feature 48 films from 38 countries. The films are based on themes of peace, harmony, non-violence and non-discrimination.

The films will be screened at cinemas in Mid Valley Megamall and KLCC on Feb 17 and 18.

Only one entry from each country will be allowed to compete for three prizes in the Perdana Award and the four prizes in Jury Merit Award.

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