

'PM wants May 13 film shown to Felda settlers'

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By Nigel Aw

Some 3,000 Felda settlers were given an exclusive preview of the controversial film Tanda Putera at a gathering today aimed at bolstering support for the BN.

The screening, which was not on the schedule for the Felda gathering, was slotted in after lunch at the request of Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak, Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Ahmad Maslan said.

"This film is not in the cinemas, but this historical film is very important, I have been informed by the prime minister. The prime minister asked that it be screened (for the Felda settlers).

"So, when else can I gather so many people like this? If we wait till tomorrow it'll already be the general election," Ahmad told the audience at the Putra World Trade Complex in Kuala Lumpur.

The film chronicles the relationship of former prime minister Abdul Razak Hussein and his deputy, Dr Ismail Abdul Rahman, amid the backdrop of the May 13, 1969, racial riots.

It was scheduled to hit the screens on Sept 13 last year, but was pushed back to Nov 15 before being deferred to some time later this year.

After a special screening for ministers, Information, Communications and Culture Minister Rais Yatim had said the deferment was a cabinet decision because of certain unsuitable scenes in Tanda Putera.

However, Ahmad told the audience today that the screening of the film was postponed because "tears were flowing" after the ministers watched the film.

The RM4.8 million film had been criticised for being biased towards the establishment in its version of the racial riots but the film director, Shuhaimi Baba, defended it, saying Tanda Putera would help the country to overcome the May 13 trauma.

The film was screened at 1pm, when the Felda settlers returned from lunch after an earlier session with former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who in his hour-long lecture urged them to support the BN in the coming general election.

Only the Felda settlers were allowed to watch the film, which was screened after the journalists present in the hall were asked to leave.

'No Kit Siang urination'

It is learnt the film has scenes of Najib's father, then prime minister and founder of Felda, visiting their settlements - something to resonate with the audience present.

Those who watched the film said the controversial scene of urination on the flag pole bearing the Selangor flag outside the then menteri besar Harun Idris was in the film, but it was done was by a group of Chinese youths.

This scene had generated wide controversy after the Facebook page for Tanda Putera posted a photograph depicting a man urinating on a flag pole, claiming that it was DAP supremo Lim Kit Siang (on left in picture).

Lim vehemently denied the claim, pointing out that he was not in Selangor when the 1969 riots occurred.

It is understood that the urination was part of a series of scenes to show DAP and Gerakan supporters laying claim to having captured Selangor in the 1969 general election - and this prevented local Malays from passing on what had supposedly become their turf.

This eventually escalated into the racial riots. However, the riots and the subsequent parts are only in the early part of the film.

The remainder focuses on the Razak-Ismail friendship, their efforts in nation-building and their struggles with their individual illnesses.

VIDEO| 1.20 mins

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