

## **Gov't forces radio stations to air new local songs**

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Effective March 1, all radio stations are required to air songs from local singers' new albums or singles, Information, Communication and Culture Minister Rais Yatim said. The requirement, aimed at spurring the local music industry, would also be made a precondition for the issuance of radio licence, he added.

"I believe radio stations will have no problem adhering to this compulsory requirement," he told reporters after presenting accreditation certificates for local performing artists at Studio Sound Stage at the National Film Development Corporation of Malaysia (Finas) at Jalan Hulu Kelang in Selangor.

He said that the directive, under Section 33 of the Communications and Multimedia Act 1988, was made as there were little efforts shown by radio stations to promote local songs.

Section 33, among others, stipulates that the minister, at any time, has the power modify or vary the special conditions of an existing licence.

Asked why the government was imposing such a drastic measure, Rais (*left*) said it was done because of the trend in the industry which did not favour the local music scene.

"There are radio stations which couldn't care less about the local music. They tend to amuse themselves with foreign songs and not giving due attention to the 'Love the Malaysian music' programme," he said.

Rais said the move was also to rejuvenate the country's 'ailing' music industry which saw its value diminishing from RM200 million a year in 2001 to RM70 million a year at the moment.

### **Karyawan gives backing**

Apart from making it compulsory to air local songs, the ministry would also strive to address other issues encumbering the industry such as piracy and illegal downloading of songs via the Internet.

He also said that a music department would be set up under the ministry in the efforts to strengthen the country's music industry. On the accreditation certificate, which was presented to nine music groups and an individual, Rais said, it was aimed at enhancing the quality of local artists and musicians.

Those accredited would be given priority to perform in hotels, he said. Previously, there were complaints from organisers and the hotel industry that they had difficulties hiring quality local artists.

"The ministry will set up a monitoring committee to ensure that 70 percent of performing artists are sourced locally and the rest from abroad," he said.

He also suggested that Kuala Lumpur's Padang Merbok be made a hub for public performance involving music and theatre groups as well as comedians and veteran artists.

Karyawan president Freddie Fernandez welcomed the compulsory airing of local songs

saying it was a recognition to the local music industry.

- *Bernama*

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