

KERATAN AKHBAR

**JUDUL : AKMAL AHMAD BRINGS BASIR' 'GREY' CHARACTER TO
IN 'SUNGAI MENGALIR LESU'**

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Akmal Ahmad Brings Basir's 'Grey' Character To Life In 'Sungai Mengalir Lesu'



By Mohd Afiq Zulkifli

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- The play 'Sungai Mengalir Lesu' based on a novel by National Laureate Datuk Seri Dr Abdul Samad Mohamed Said, better known as A. Samad Said, returns to the stage at the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka auditorium for four nights, starting at 8.30 pm today.

Published in 1967, the novel depicts characters from diverse communities whose daily lives are overshadowed by hunger, the brutality of Japanese soldiers and the looming threat of death.

Among the theatre production's lead cast is young actor Akmal Ahmad, who plays Basir, a central character in the story set in Singapore during the Second World War. The remaining cast includes Nesa Idrus, Shasha Fairus and Roydy Rokidy, who bring to life the atmosphere of wartime Singapore.

Akmal said the main challenge in bringing Basir to life was revealing the "grey" side of an ordinary, imperfect human being.



"Most lead characters are usually heroic, pure and noble, but Basir is different. He has a good side, but he also has flaws. He does things to help others, but there is always some personal gain as well. I would describe him as a 'grey' character," he told Bernama.

Known for his role in the action film 'Coast Guard Malaysia: Ops Helang', Akmal said classic works such as 'Sungai Mengalir Lesu' demand deep interpretation because of their rich layers of meaning, while also challenging actors to engage younger audiences, particularly Gen Z.

"The challenge as an actor is ensuring that the audience can grasp those layers. The dialogue may look simple but it carries hidden meaning. That's why I read the novel repeatedly and discussed it extensively with the director.



"I had just 25 days to prepare for my role, so I had to work harder than the others. The part where Basir plots to steal food from the Japanese soldiers was among the scenes that impacted me the most," he added.

Akmal, a graduate of the National Academy of Arts, Culture and Heritage (ASWARA), started his career as a stage actor before moving into television dramas and films.

"But after the COVID-19 lockdown, I promised myself that I would do at least one theatre production a year. Theatre is important to sharpen acting techniques that we don't always get to refine on film sets," said Akmal, who also performed in the musical 'Tun Mahathir' at Istana Budaya in 2010 and 'Sirih Bertepuk Pinang Menari' directed by Dr Lenny Irwan last year.



Meanwhile, 'Sungai Mengalir Lesu' director Aris Othman said being entrusted to restage the play after nearly three decades is both an honour and a heavy responsibility.

"When the play was first staged in 1997, I was just an extra. This time, being given the mandate to direct it carries far greater responsibility. I am grateful for the trust placed in me to interpret Pak Samad's (A. Samad Said) masterpiece on stage," he said.

According to Aris, the overwhelming response to the play, with tickets nearly sold out in advance, proves that A. Samad Said's works remain timeless, eagerly awaited by audiences and still relevant today.

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