

Filmmaker keen to work with UMS

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By Natasha Sim

KOTA KINABALU: Metrowealth International Group (MIG) Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Major David Teo has expressed keen interest in developing a working relationship with University Malaysia Sabah (UMS) on film production.

The School of Art Studies at UMS had definitely matured since his first visit in 2003, he told a press conference yesterday, adding that he believed there were enough students to train for the film industry.

“Depending on how fast the paperwork can be done, I’m willing to start the partnership even by the end of this year if everything is ready. We can start anytime soon,” he said.

He further said the partnership with UMS was to get local Sabahans involved in the industry and would be especially targeted at developing

more Sabahans as human capital for the film industry.

The Metrowealth International Group is the label behind Malaysian blockbusters like ‘KL Gangster’, ‘Jangan Pandang Belakang’, the latest ‘Bencinta’, and manages big personalities like Lisa Surihani, Maya Karin and Sabahan actress, Wawa Zainal.

According to David, the major production company has had 96 titles under its belt since its inception in 2003 and a target of about another 200 more films by 2020.

Earlier, when speaking to students from the UMS School of Art Studies in an industry talk at UMS Recital Hall, he emphasized the need for the film industry to preserve the Malaysian heritage and culture.

“How does one expect to expand his or her films overseas if you haven’t been number one in Malaysia? If you can’t even preserve your own

culture, how do you preserve the culture of others?” he posed.

In answering a question from the audience, he said Malaysian filmmakers had to be conscious of their own culture and values when making films.

David further stressed the potential of Bahasa Malaysia being an ‘international language’ in film and Malaysian culture exportable, much like what is seen with the Korean film industry.

“The Koreans never tried to use, for example, English in their films or drama series but are still very popular with an international audience.

“Malaysian films represent Malaysian culture and our society. If we look at the Thai film industry also, the box office hits are all local Thai films,” he said.

He believes that film as entertainment acts as an avenue for the preservation of



David Teo (left) and Dr Zairul Anwar Md Dawam (right), Vice-Dean at the UMS School of Art Studies hosting the talk here yesterday.

national culture and heritage.

Speaking from industry experience, he said there was no one fixed formula to make a smashing film and that the creative arts were subjective.

“Commercial films usually follow trends or what is popular at the moment,” he remarked, adding that film shapes the social values of the younger generation.

However, David said more often than not, filmmakers were required to make the choice of choosing to produce artistic films or commercially viable films.

He commented that artistic films like those by the late Yasmin Ahmad or ‘Bunohan’ by Dain Said usually garnered international awards but

locally they lacked popularity and commercial success.

Additionally, he believes that in making commercial films, it raises human capital because there are a lot of parties involved which in turn generates career opportunities.

“For the case of MIG, we are very clear in our goals – that is to make commercially viable and profitable films,” he said.

David also highlighted that the film industry was a very encouraging environment with many opportunities for newbies, be it in front of the camera or behind the scenes.

Ending with advice to the audience, David said one must always be realistic in goals despite the challenges of pursuing a career in film.