

Head For Business, A Heart For The World
Institut Pembangunan Keusahawanan dan Koperasi
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"UUM : UNIVERSITI PENGURUSAN TERKEMUKA"
(THE EMINENT MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY)

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Head for business, a heart for the world



IS it possible to have a head for business and a heart for the world? To a group of young undergraduates from Universiti Utara Malaysia, it is not only possible but desirable.

Our future will not be sustainable if business is strictly about making money and we do not care about the environment and social consequences, one of them passionately argued during a recent visit to *The Star*.

He sounded like one of the judges at the recently concluded StarBiz-ICR Malaysia Corporate Responsibility Awards.

It was refreshing to listen to this group, who are members of the Students in Free Enterprise (SIFE), an international organisation that has

chapters in colleges and universities to promote entrepreneurship at this level.

If these young people are going to be part of Corporate Malaysia one day, there is hope.

Different perspective

Led by its president Khairun Najmi Kamisan, they were articulate and confident.

What I found interesting was that the majority of them are city kids who now see life from a different perspective.

One of the students told me that she resented being sent to UUM at first but realises now that this is an experience of a lifetime that money cannot buy.

There is a world of difference between bustling Bangsar and serene Sintok.

Sintok, some 50km north of Alor Star, and close to the Thai border, sits in a land of unique natural beauty, surrounded by the greenery of

paddy fields, rolling hills, and clear blue skies.

The students described the beauty of the natural environment and how the lack of entertainment and other forms of distractions have made them more aware of their surroundings and the plight of their fellow citizens.

There is also an immense sense of history about the town, which was once a black area.

Interestingly enough, there is a memorial structure at the UUM campus which lists down the names of the members of our security forces killed by the communists.

I reckon that UUM students who go there just to concentrate on their books will surely lose out on the extended education of life if they do not interact much with the local community.

For these Sifers, as they proudly call themselves, the theory on entrepreneurship must be made practical in the real world.

And a project that they are currently doing is to assist a group of disabled people in Sungai Petani market their home-made chocolate.

Under the project, aptly named HEART, the students work with this small group on quality control issues, marketing strategies and long-term business plans.

Dare to dream

We are looking beyond them being seen as charity cases and for their products to go further than just the immediate vicinity, said Darren Lee Boon Lye, the organisation's vice-president of public relations.

These students dare to dream and they hope that with the right marketing and distribution strategies, they will be able to help this small community sell the chocolate in major hotels and tourist spots in Pulau Langkawi, to compete against the boutique brands from around the world.

The other rationale for the project is to help society lose their prejudice towards the disabled.

The formula is not unique but I feel it is a wonderful mission because they are doing it quietly and effectively, without the glare of publicity, to make a difference in their little corner of the world.

I wished them well. It will be tough but one should not be surprised what the zeal of youthful enterprise can accomplish. More so if they desire to have a head for business, and a heart for the world.

● Deputy executive editor Soo Ewe Jin would like to quote Mike Hughes, the much-loved headmaster of Penang Free School (the last British headmaster from 1957 to 1963) who recently passed away. "You may be tempted to look for wealth first and seek knowledge second. Perhaps it might be advisable to pursue knowledge to the utmost and then it may not be necessary to look for wealth."

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