

Despite Tanda Putera flop, Shuhaimi looks to Putrajaya to fund next movie
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Tanda Putera might have been a box-office bomb but film director Datin Paduka Shuhaimi Baba (pic) has already begun work on her next movie for which she is expecting another government grant.

Her new movie, *Regalia*, is an epic film on The Johor-Riau Sultanate going against The Dutch administration in Malacca in the 19th century.

She told *The Malaysian Insider* that work on the film has begun but investors are shying away after Tanda Putera's box office failure following an uproar among Malaysians, especially the Chinese. Tanda Putera is a film based on the May 13, 1969 racial riots in Kuala Lumpur.

"The political temperament on Tanda Putera has scared investors," she lamented.

Undeterred, the director said that on top of investors she could find and a government grant, she would be using her own money to finance the movie.

"Using mine (her money) too. I will need more time to get investors," she said.

Commenting on *Regalia*, Shuhaimi, 63, said she was intrigued by the story line when she read a document called *The Precious Gift*. It portrayed the Bugis superiority during the maritime war.

The director, who was behind popular horror movies like *Pontianak Harum Sundal Malam* and its sequel, was impressed with the ingenuity of the Malay army at that time.

The movie focuses on Princess Hamidah, who married Sultan Mahmud Shah III in 1803. After his death, she was in control of the 'royal regalia' which were ornaments an heir had to have before he could be crowned.

"Basically, she was the kingmaker. Both the Dutch and the English were after the regalia to make different sons of the late king as the successor to continue their influence," said Shuhaimi.

She said that work on the visual effects had started as "it would take a long while to be completed".

"We realised, when doing Tanda Putera, that special effects take a lot of time so we started early with *Regalia*," she said, adding that she has actresses and actors in mind for each role.

"We have also done part of the costumes."

The RM4.8-million Tanda Putera invited controversy after the DAP and MCA raised concerns that some scenes and dialogue in the film could incite racial tension.

Both Chinese-based political parties criticised the movie for showing that the Chinese was responsible for the riots in 1969.

DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang was upset with Tanda Putera, which showed a scene of several young Chinese youths urinating at a flagpole in the compound of the former Selangor menteri besar Datuk Harun Idris. It implied that Lim was one of the youths.

In a posting on the movie's Facebook page yesterday, the administrator apologised for accusing Lim of being involved in the incident.

The movie opened in cinemas on August 29 and has since bombed at the box office. Shuhaimi had said earlier that she knew the movie would not garner much interest because its genre - historical - was not popular among movie-goers. - September 14, 2013.

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