

## K.C. Boey: Uniting Malaysians in Melbourne

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THE weather isn't promising. Whichever way the day pans out, aspiring community builder Mohamed Izhar Moslim will take heart over what he gets out of it.

This time next year, Izhar will be back in Kuala Lumpur. But this morning in Melbourne's Southbank, he will have cause to be proud, knowing that he has contributed to reinforcing the sense of community of Malaysians in the city.

Izhar is more than a stage manager at Fiesta Malaysia, the opening event to Malaysia Week.

Together with fiesta project manager Aida Zabidi, he has been driven by a sense of social awareness to bring Malaysians together and to promote Malaysia as a place to do business and as a tourist destination.

Malaysia Week stretches to Oct 13.

For the first time, a number of events previously held at various times will come under one umbrella, bringing together business, film and student and cultural organisations.

"The feedback has been very positive about bringing Malaysians together and to promote Malaysia's culture and prospects for business," says Amir Marzuki, chairman of the Malaysian Students Council of Australia (MASCA) Victoria, of its 10 affiliate clubs and organisations at various universities.

Among business, A2K Media has held the Australian Malaysian Film Festival for two years since 2007. This year, the festival is being held as part of Malaysia Week.

The enthusiasm the youth have brought to the organisation has impressed director Kate Stephens.

Izhar, as president of Kelab Umno Australia Melbourne (KUAM), last year put the idea of Malaysia Week to MASCA and A2K Media.

KUAM and MASCA had collaborated on Fiesta Malaysia, first held in 2006 and then last year.

Izhar was then fine-tuning the transformation of the Umno social club to include all Malaysians in its activities and to work with the other clubs.

It was a process his predecessors had started.

"There is no reason why a Malay-based organisation cannot benefit all Malaysians," says Izhar.

Selangor-born Izhar, proud that he spent his growing-up years with mostly non-Malay friends in Penang, was telling the New Sunday Times how it came to be that KUAM adopted the catchphrase KUAMuniti, a play on the words "community" and "unity" ([tinyurl.com/ybnmwhm](http://tinyurl.com/ybnmwhm)).

The objective shows in the Fiesta Malaysia programme. There are music, dance, lion dance and martial arts, costumes, food and games from Malay, Chinese, Indian and Peranakan communities and from East Malaysia.

The theme is being carried through in many of the films in the film festival, which will pay tribute to Yasmin Ahmad.

Talentine, with its mix of dialogue in Malay, English, Tamil and Cantonese, will open the festival on Oct 4. The

festival will close on Oct 7 with Yasmin's Muallaf.

The film festival will include an exhibition of batik design and fashion.

For the first time, Fiesta Malaysia will have a small business and trade expo, with involvement from AirAsia X, Malaysia External Trade Development Corporation, Tourism Malaysia and Proton.

Other business programmes during Malaysia Week include a career fair for students and an international business councils golf day organised by the Australia Malaysia Business Council.

KUAM will have a "Malam Gemilang Malaysia" black-tie dinner, now in its 10th year.

Socially aware and active families have been the inspiration for Izhar and Aida.

As with both his parents, SMK Seksyen 9 Shah Alam old boy Izhar is a former graduate of the University of Melbourne.

His father, Moslim Othman, a civil engineer, runs his own business while his mother, Khairiah Talha, a past president of the Malaysian Institute of Town Planners, is active in non-governmental organisations.

Architecture graduate Izhar went on to postgraduate studies at RMIT University, completing double-major master's degrees in business administration and commerce.

Social awareness has grown with Izhar's family. He and his wife Farah Damia, married in 2007, are expecting their first child.

"I feel that after I got married, I needed to start doing more productive things and showing more responsibility.

"Marriage at a young age has driven me to strive to achieve better things and I strongly believe that I wouldn't be who I am today, or achieve what I have, if not for my wife."

Politics has come to mind, to "make a difference". It has led to Izhar, 25, becoming chairman of Umno Australia/New Zealand, with 11 clubs.

Aida, 25, a former student of SMK Subang Utama, is in her fifth year studying medicine at the University of Melbourne.

Her mother Juairiah, a special education teacher, has had a profound influence on her three daughters. Petronas scholar Aida believes she will end up in public health and health advocacy.

"I believe that leading by example and getting involved with the local community is the best way to grow as a person, and that we all have a responsibility to give back to our country," she says.

Younger sister Khairun, a graduate in mass communications from Universiti Teknologi Mara, is passionate about climate change, and has represented Malaysia at United Nations conferences.

Youngest sister Hamizatul is studying pharmacy at UiTM.

It's this awareness that drives Izhar and Aida, in the spirit of KUAMuniti, and MASCA's "Road to Unity".

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