

YASMIN AHMAD DIES

S'pore mourns death of film-maker

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ACCLAIMED Malaysian film and advertising director Yasmin Ahmad (picture) died on Saturday night in the Damansara Specialists Hospital

in Kuala Lumpur from complications following a stroke. She was 51.

But as Malaysians mourn the loss of a remarkable woman who was lauded for her controversial, thought-provoking films that pushed and challenged social and racial

boundaries, they are joined by the many Singaporeans who have also been stirred by her magic touch.

The film-maker and creative executive director at Leo Burnett was possibly best-known in Singapore for her delicate yet clever direction

of the award-winning pro-family commercials for the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS).

The story of a single father, his teenage daughter and a pair of red shoes touched Singaporeans' hearts and earned top honours at the MediaCorp Viewers' Choice Awards. Its follow up, a funeral where an Indian woman gives a moving but humorous eulogy for her late Chinese husband, also struck a chord and won praise internationally.

MCYS' director of communications and international relations, Mr Richard Tan, told TODAY: "When I first heard the news (of her passing), it brought tears to my eyes. In the less than two years that I've known Yasmin, I've learnt so much from her. She taught me about humanity and I have been in the public education for more than 20-odd years."

Mr Tan said Ms Yasmin's MCYS commercials "changed our way of looking at social issues".

"She believed that the message of humanity, told in a child-like honesty, would transcend all races and nationalities. And she was right," he said.

Mr Tan added they were planning to develop a 13-part drama for Singapore television in the spirit of those MCYS commercials. "She was very excited," he said. "It was going to be her first foray into TV."

The local Singapore film industry is also feeling the loss of Yasmin who, with her signature pluralist approach and sensitive familial touch — evident in her award-winning slate of work,



TODAY FILE PHOTO

which includes *Sepet*, *Gubra* and *Mukhsin* — was still very much in her prime.

Shared Mr Thomas Chia, managing partner of Lighthouse Pictures, which distributed her films here in Singapore: "I cannot even think of anyone else who can take her place. She had so much more to give."

Mr Chia is producing *Go, Thaddeus!*, a film about the late 17-year old Singaporean triathlete Thaddeus Cheong, which Ms Yasmin was to direct.

"She was so full of life, charm and wit," said film-maker Eric Khoo. "When I met her for the first time in Pusan (at the city's film festival) last year, I didn't think it would be our last. We have lost a real passionate and talented soul."

Yasmin who was survived by two siblings and her husband, Abdullah Tan Yew Leong, was laid to rest at a Muslim cemetery in Subang Jaya, near Kuala Lumpur on Sunday.

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Charity through web games

PLAY a web game and help the disadvantaged.

A new initiative launched yesterday by the South West Community Development Council (CDC) — in collaboration with local bank POSB — allows online players to do their bit for charity while trying to beat the highest scores.

At website *ClicktoAid.Sg*, scores will be translated to fund contributions by corporate partners sponsoring the programme for needy children.

Mayor of South West District Amy Khor said the e-donation

portal, which is the first of its kind in Singapore, hopes to engage both corporate partners and the e-community: "Moving ahead, we will be again harnessing the power of the Internet to encourage more volunteerism. We're also looking at revamping our website to make it a lot more interactive."

POSB is contributing \$25,000 to the programme. With the CDC's dollar-for-dollar matching, a total of \$50,000 will be set aside to help 1,000 new Primary One students next year.