

NST 2/9/23 p13

# A PESZTA for all

**T**HE second PESZTA festival, which took place in Kampung Attap, Kuala Lumpur, in conjunction with National Day and Malaysia Day celebrations, drew 4,000 visitors for a day of arts, culture and music.

Visitors savoured the sights, sounds and food and, participated in activities at the artistic hub of the Merdeka 118 precinct.

This area includes the Zhongshan Building, Sam Mansion, Triptyk, Pentago House, the KL and Selangor Chinese Assembly Hall, The HEART Residence and the newly established Pusat Kesenian DBKL.

Organised by PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn Bhd (PMVSB), the festival was a collaboration with City Hall and Think City, as well as surrounding communities and artistes.

Visitors were treated to a guzheng string performance, a bhangra drums session by Dhol Alliance, a Warisan Borneo dance and a St John's Alumni Pipe Band recital, as well as a silat performances by Melody Gangsa Gamelan and Kumpulan Silat Sekolah Hang Tuah 1.

In the evening, music fans got to enjoy performances by indie artistes, including Zee Avi and Alena Murang.

The festival featured workshops, open studios, participatory art, talks, markets, exhibitions and culinary delights.

PMVSB chief executive officer Tengku Datuk Ab Aziz Tengku Mahmud said the festival provides a platform for communities to showcase their businesses besides promoting the nation's diversity.

"We want this to be like your neighbourhood fete, where you can come and activate your five senses by experiencing the festival.

"At the same time, we also wanted to make sure that there was something for everyone to



PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn Bhd CEO Tengku Datuk Ab Aziz Tengku Mahmud trying out the 118 Stories: An immersive experience at PESZTA.

enjoy, aside from capturing the spirit of Merdeka."

Tengku Aziz said the event was one way of galvanising and communities in the vicinity, and to enable businesses to thrive.

"We launched the Merdeka 118 Community Grants Programme and worked with the community in business, sports and arts.

"Rather than being an island, we would like to engage with the community of the Merdeka 118 precinct.

"The response had been tremendous, and we are seeing spillover

effects.

"From there, we realised that there was an opportunity to promote the community through business and arts. That's how PESZTA came about."

Last year, the festival had three community partners, and this year, it grew to seven, with the event attracting more visitors as well.

Tengku Aziz said: "We hope the numbers will continue to grow. We also work with schools in the area.

"There is so much history here and we believe that together with the community, we can showcase the beauty



PNB Merdeka Ventures Sdn Bhd, which built and owns Merdeka 118, aims to provide a platform via PESZTA for the community to showcase their businesses, talent, art and heritage. PIX COURTESY OF PESZTA

hidden in the community.

"And what you see today is a circular economy, where we are trying to make a vibrant precinct while collaborating and integrating with the community."

He said PMVSB would continue to work as one with the communities.

"We are also upgrading the community. Recently, we restored and upgraded a multipurpose park at the Hang Tuah People's Housing Project.

"We will continue to provide financial support to businesses through our Merdeka 118 Community Grants Programme.

"Each business will represent a sector like arts or sports.

"The idea is to provide an opportunity for businesses to grow and to promote sectors in the community.

"Our goal is for the area and com-

munity to grow."

PMVSB plans to use Stadium Merdeka, which is next to Merdeka 118, as a platform for community and cultural activities.

"As the custodian of Stadium Merdeka, we will leverage the venue for such events.

"We have restored Stadium Merdeka to its 1957 state and would like to share this with Malaysians.

"We are installing a running track at the stadium.

"We aim to use it for activities such as football, yoga and tai chi, so that the community can join and benefit from it.

"We are looking to open Stadium Merdeka to the public in the first quarter of 2024," he said of the venue, which has been closed since 2016.

areffdnst.com.my

PESZTA featured workshops, open studios, participatory art, performances, talks, markets, exhibitions and culinary treats for visitors.



Sarawak sape queen Alena Murang entertaining visitors at the PESZTA festival in Kampung Attap, Kuala Lumpur.

