



## Being an economic advisor keeps Yong Hee Kong on the go.

By WONG LI ZA  
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**Y**ONG Hee Kong grew up in a Buddhist family, attended a Catholic mission school and holds a post-graduate Diploma in Islamic Studies from the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (IIUM), Kuala Lumpur.

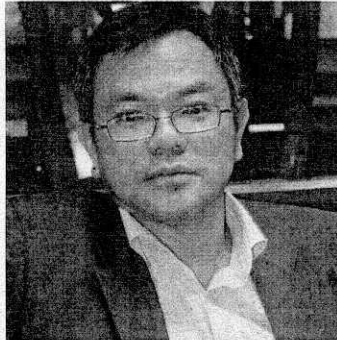
It comes as no surprise that religion in general was always something that piqued his interest.

"All religions preach love. I took up the Islamic Studies course because I also wanted to understand more about Islamic project financing," explained Yong, 50.

"However, I must say that it was the best course I'd ever done so far. I was amazed at what was taught in the course and the lecturers were great thinkers who knew their subject matter very well. It was a privilege to learn from them and a truly humbling experience."

Yong is currently the Commonwealth Secretariat Adviser of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) and Corporate Governance based in London. (PPP is known as Private Finance Initiative (PFI) and Privatisation in Malaysia). He holds a Bachelor of Engineering (Civil and Structural) from Bradford University in Yorkshire, Britain.

A former La Salle Sentul and St John's Institution student, Yong has a Master of



**Role model:** 'The Malaysian capital market is a very suitable example for developing countries,' says Yong Hee Kong.

Business Administration from the same university, having completed it on a part-time basis over three years.

Yong was in Kuala Lumpur recently for the Pan-Commonwealth Workshop on *Leveraging Corporate Governance and Ethics Strategies In Strengthening Institutional Integrity System Against Corruption*.

The workshop was jointly organised by the Malaysian Institute of Integrity and the Commonwealth Secretariat, supported by the Companies Commission of Malaysia.

At the start of the interview, Yong expressed high praise for Malaysia's capital market institutions.

"The Securities Commission and KLSB (Bursa Malaysia) are of world-class standard

and headed by brilliant people," he said, adding that the Minority Shareholders Watchdog Group is also doing good work.

"The Malaysian capital market is a very suitable example for developing countries. There is a good opportunity for Malaysia to export its expertise in the areas of Islamic infrastructural project financing and debt financing."

Yong also holds a Diploma in Corporate Treasury (UK) and qualified as a Chartered Accountant (Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales). He also completed the Harvard University Privatisation Course.

After graduating with his degree in engineering, Yong stayed on in Britain and joined then Deloitte Haskins & Sells (an international consulting firm which was later merged with another company) as a management consultant while continuing with his studies part-time.

He spent a total of 13 years in Britain working with various private firms in consulting roles before returning to Malaysia in the early 90s.

"After a while, I felt that Malaysia was still home and I wanted to contribute to the country," he said.

Yong spent the next 15 years in different consulting and advisory positions, also in the private sector, before returning to London last year to assume his current job.

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### Fact File

**NAME:** Yong Hee Kong  
**AGE:** 50

**HOMETOWN:** Kuala Lumpur

**EDUCATION:** La Salle, Sentul, KL; St John's Institution, KL; Bradford University, Britain

**OCCUPATION:** Commonwealth Secretariat Adviser

**CURRENT BASE:** London

**YEARS ABROAD:** 14

**E-MAIL:** h.yong@commonwealth.int

# Wealth of advice

Yong provides advisory and capacity-building support to the 53 member countries of the Commonwealth. His role is to create PPP awareness, help develop and set PPP policies and framework, and help implement related programmes. His job description involves conducting briefing and training workshops for prime ministers in various countries, their Cabinet members and their ministries.

After the Pan-Commonwealth workshop in KL, he flew to Colombo to conduct a briefing for over 60 Sri Lankan ministers on PPP, and thereafter to Barbados to do a similar briefing.

Yong was also involved in helping the Indonesian Government set up its PPP framework two years ago.

His work may sound quite a mouthful and involves high-level officials but it affects the man in the street in every way.

"The Government needs to implement infrastructure projects to stimulate the economy. It also needs to reduce budget deficits. Infrastructure projects have one of the highest multiplier effects, reportedly seven times, which means RM1 spent on a project generates RM7 into the economy.

"That's why some governments like to build their way out of the recession," said Yong.

Being relatively new to his position, Yong is at present tasked with building networks between PPP units in the various Commonwealth countries and private sector investors.

"We involve the private sector because we have to enlist their help in building and financing infrastructure projects."

Yong's main challenge right now is handling the huge request from different governments to assist in PPP programmes. Eighty per cent of his time is spent travelling out of London. However, there is no question that Yong loves his job, a telltale sign being that he works seven days a week.

He is working on publishing a book for the Commonwealth entitled *Compendium of Best Practices in PPPs* which will be out in October. Although quite a workaholic, Yong takes time in between work to jog along the River Thames or stroll through London's Borough Market.

How does it feel going back to Britain after many years?

"I like the diversity in terms of culture, race, religion and food but I wish the weather was less dreary," said Yong, father of two daughters aged 15 and 19.