



# ALUMNIbulletin

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T O W A R D S  
T O M O R R O W



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*Cover rationale: Looking out to the sunrise from the window of a traditional Malay house, symbolises the concept of moving forward while preserving our cultural values.*

## From the Vice-Chancellor

### **Assalamualaikum warahmatullah/Salam sejahtera.**

I hope you are well despite the challenges posed by Covid-19 and its spillover effects. 2020 has been tough for everyone. The only way to weather this storm is to stay diligent and work as a tight unit, something which I can proudly attribute to USM.

USM stayed united. Everyone - the staff, students, our partners - played our respective part. We led the way in handling the first Covid-19 wave, made possible through the collective wisdom of our experts and support agencies.

This issue features a number of fantastic achievements by our staff and students. Despite the pandemic, we continue to break new grounds in research and teaching. Our students persist at winning awards and securing important work placements - acknowledgements for both their intrinsic and instrumental qualities.

I hope you will enjoy this Bulletin. We are now busy setting our targets for 2021. We have built a strong foundation and momentum towards reaching our APEX agenda. I believe we will grow stronger and continue to be a major factor as we play our part in the process of nation-building. We Lead.

**Professor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan**  
*Vice-Chancellor*

# From DVC to Alumni

## CONNECTING WITH USM

### Assalamualaikum and Greetings to USM Alumni,

I wish you and your family are all in good health and are coping well with the current situation. Amidst all that is happening; I am proud to inform that we have recently published our second edition of the Alumni Bulletin.

First of all, I would like to send my congratulations again to the Class of 2020. All of you have earned my deepest respect as you have all persevered through during this pandemic that has impacted us all. This clearly shows your persistent character in completing tasks despite all of the challenges that you have to face. Never give up! We are proud of your accomplishments and welcome you as a lifetime member of the USM family.

I am also very grateful to receive many feedbacks from our alumni who are generous in sharing their knowledge and on campus experiences via The Alumni Insights. For your information, we have appointed an Alumni Ambassador from each School to better connect with you. You may now visit our website and check out your respective School's Alumni Ambassador. We hope to receive more meaningful tips and advice from our alumni in creating our HEBAT (Holistic, Entrepreneurial, Balanced, Articulate and Thinking) students.

We are currently working to garner more funding/funds from our Adopt Your Hostel Room @ USM programme. This initiative is aimed at providing a better ambience for our students. Throughout these years, the hostels have been maintained with USM funding the repairs,

maintenance fees. As part of the alumni, some of our fondest memories are of the days we spent in the hostel. We hope our generous alumni could contribute in helping us build the world-class ambience for our current and future students as a way for you to give back to your alma mater.

I cannot deny the fact that one of the initiatives we need to undertake is to build a stronger ground swell of support for USM amongst its alumni population. Currently, we are out of contact with a large number of our graduates and we have embarked upon a comprehensive tracing programme to reconnect with them. A strategy within this programme is to work through major employers having USM graduates to identify our alumni within each workforce. Do extend this message to your family, friends and employees to update their data in our Alumni System.

Last but not least, our Desasiswa will open for Staycation for you to revisit your campus life. Take a trip down memory lane to reminisce your student life once again. Bring your loved ones, your ex-mates and fill up your staycation itinerary with fun activities of your choice.

I thank you in advance for your generosity and stay safe always.

### Professor Dr. Aldrin Abdullah

(B.Sc.HBP '93, B.Arch. '94)

Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Division of Students Development Affairs & Alumni



## GOT NEWS?

- Are you moving?
- Started a new business?
- Doing a charity work?
- Received a promotion?

## STAY CONNECTED WITH USM ↗

We'd like to hear from you. Email your stories to Alumni Development Centre [[dir\\_alumni@usm.my](mailto:dir_alumni@usm.my)]. Include your photo, full name, course and graduation year.

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## Realising A Sustainable Green Campus

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) is on the right track in its commitment towards realising the sustainable Green Campus agenda. That was said by the Deputy Minister of Environment and Water, Senator Dato' Dr. Ahmad Masrizal Muhammad, who was suitably impressed and satisfied with the various initiatives implemented by USM in mobilising the campus community to collectively uphold the responsibility to realise the sustainable environment agenda.

Ahmad Masrizal is a USM alumni who graduated in 1996 and earned a Bachelor of Arts with Education. He is also the former President of the USM Student Representative Council (MPP) for the Academic Session of 1995/1996.

"One example would be the initiative by USM in establishing the University Sustainability Council to clearly and precisely outline the steps towards achieving the objective of becoming a Green Campus, a move that is praiseworthy and should be emulated.

"In addition, it is hoped that other higher learning institutions (IPTs-HEIs) would follow in the steps of USM by making it compulsory for all the graduates to enrol in the course on sustainable development," he said when attending the Green Synergy Environmental Sustainability and Green Campus Programme at the USM main campus here recently.

He added that the Ministry has selected USM as the first IPT for his visit in the series of 'Green Campus Tour' to promote the challenge of having a low-carbon campus by the Malaysian Green Technology and Climate Change Centre (MGTC) to all IPTs in the country.

"I will be going to universities around the country to raise the awareness among the students on the importance of reducing the carbon footprint and on sustainable development.

**"...it is hoped that other higher learning institutions (IPTs-HEIs) would follow in the steps of USM by making it compulsory for all the graduates to enrol in the course on sustainable development."**

**Ahmad Masrizal**  
(B.A [Ed] '96)



**Planting a sapling to symbolise the launch of the Green Synergy Programme**



**“The students are our catalysts, enablers and spokespeople to the outside world, and there is no better place than the universities to reinforce this concept, more so in a university like USM...”**

“The students are our catalysts, enablers and spokespeople to the outside world, and there is no better place than the universities to reinforce this concept, more so in a university like USM which is currently in the top position (#65) among the IPTs-HEIs in Malaysia in the University Impact Rankings of Times Higher Education (THE) 2020, which is assessed based on achievements relating to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),” he said.

In addition, he also announced that the Ministry of Environment and Water (KASA) will introduce a programme known as 'Jana Graduan Hijau' (JAGUH) or 'Green Graduates Initiative' to provide the opportunity to 10,000 new graduates to venture into the field of green and sustainable entrepreneurship.

“The JAGUH initiative is expected to be introduced in the third quarter of this year, and which will focus on graduates who face difficulties in securing jobs due to the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic,” he said to reporters.

Prior to that, Ahmad Masrizal visited the USM ECO Hub, where he planted a sapling to symbolise the launch of the Green Synergy Programme at the USM campus.

He also visited the USM bee farm where he was briefed on the more systematic method of 'kelulut' (stingless bee) rearing to produce high-quality honey by a senior lecturer from the Department of Neuroscience, USM School of Medical Sciences, Dr. Mohd Zulkifli Mustafa.

Among the senior officials accompanying the Deputy Minister were KASA Deputy Secretary-General of Environment, Dr. K. Nagulendran; Chief Executive Officer of MGTC, Shamsul Bahar Mohd Nor; USM Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Sustainability and Institutional Development, Professor Dr. Md Roslan Hashim; Director of USM Engineering Campus and River Engineering and Urban Drainage Research Centre (REDAC), Professor Dr. Nor Azazi Zakaria; and Director of USM Community Network (BJIM), Syed Yusof Syed Kechik.

**Text: Tan Ewe Hoe**

**Translation: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin**

**Photo: Mohd Fairus Md Isa**





## USM | Oppstar

### Explore New Opportunities to Enhance Technology

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) intends to strengthen its collaborative efforts with industry players, especially in optimising current technology to drive research development in the future.

USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan emphasised this in his visit to Oppstar Technology Sdn. Bhd., one of the local companies led by local talents which is making its mark through global expansion.

Oppstar is a premier company that specialises in providing integrated circuit (IC) design services which was initially led by two local IT experts and started operations in 2014, and which now has expanded with a workforce of more than 180.

What makes it even more meaningful is that, the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Ng Meng Thai, who heads the company, is an alumni member of USM (Bachelor's Degree in Engineering, 1989).

Faisal Rafiq said, such strategic partnerships are truly significant, especially for USM in enhancing the offerings of its courses, to ensure that it would remain competitive in facing the challenges amidst the current technological advances.

"We are impressed with the commitment and capabilities of Oppstar in positioning itself in the global arena and we intend to further collaborate in developing related areas that would provide mutual benefits to both parties," he said.

Meanwhile, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) of Oppstar, Cheah Hun Wah said that, the company welcomes any academia interested in partnering with Oppstar as the company provides opportunities for local talents to grow together.

**"...such strategic partnerships are truly significant, especially for USM in enhancing the offerings of its courses, to ensure that it would remain competitive in facing the challenges amidst the current technological advances."**

"Although Oppstar has a number of international partners, we still put priority on local talents and we are committed in producing the next generation of Malaysian-born technology experts who will be of global repute," he said.

He mentioned this during the two-way discussion session, which focused on issues relating to current developments in IC design, research opportunities and empowerment for university graduates among others at the USM University Incubation Centre (I2U) here recently.

The discussion was also held to allow the USM delegation to obtain further understanding of the operations of Oppstar and opportunities that can be explored which can be benefitted by parties concerned including the University.

Also present during the visit were USM Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) (Research and Innovation), Professor Dato' Ir. Dr. Abdul Rahman Mohamed; USM DVC (Student Development Affairs and Alumni), Professor Dr. Aldrin Abdullah; USM Director of Industry Network, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Yeoh Fei Yee; and several USM Heads of Department.

*Text: Marziana Mohamed Alias  
Translation: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin  
Photo: Mohd Fairus Md Isa*



# USM Mosque Tour Week 2020

Organised for the fifth time since it began in 2015, the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Islamic Centre continues to organise its annual programme, which is the Mosque Tour Week 2020, with various activities lined up and is open to everyone from all races and religions on campus and from the public.

The programme which is meant to instil harmony among people of various religions while promoting peace across the different faiths and universal values will be held for two days beginning 12 August until 14 August 2020 within the vicinity of the USM Masjid Al-Malik Khalid.

Among the various activities lined up include the Mosque Open Day, The Light of Sayyidil Ayyam, Entrepreneurship Class, HALAL Certification Course, Quran Recitation Competition and many others.

According to the Director of USM Islamic Centre, Tuan Haji Mohammad Shukri Osman, the Mosque Tour Week 2020 programme will be held in moderation, abiding by the SOP set by the Malaysian Ministry of Health (KKM), as the country is still dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic.

**“The programme which is meant to instil harmony among people of various religions while promoting peace across the different faiths and universal values will be held for two days beginning 12 August until 14 August 2020 within the vicinity of the USM Masjid Al-Malik Khalid.”**

“As how the programme was held in previous years, the activities organised have received good response from the students, staff as well as the public of various races and religions, even attracting the interest of international tourists to join in some of the activities.



*USM Islamic Centre staff explaining to the foreign students about the programme*



**“The USM Islamic Centre is taking a moderate approach in organising the programme, while observing all the procedures determined by the Government such as social distancing, using face masks, scanning body temperatures and recording names of those attending...”**

“However, this year it would be held in a slightly different way, as the country is still dealing with the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

“The USM Islamic Centre is taking a moderate approach in organising the programme, while observing all the procedures determined by the Government such as social distancing, using face masks, scanning body temperatures and recording names of those attending and using hand sanitisers before they could join in the activities,” said Mohammad Shukri.

He added that, this year’s programme will only run during office hours, from 8.30 am until 6.00 pm as compared to previous years, which would continue until night time.

“This would allow the organiser to better manage the activities and the hygiene of the venue, which are still bound by the restrictions of the Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO) phase.

Other activities organised are the Mosque Innovation Competition (INOMOS) in looking for new and innovative ideas to be implemented for the mosque and Creating an Education Icon (‘Captain Khalid’) Competition.

The programme this year is organised with the cooperation of Department of Islamic Affairs Penang (JHEAIPP), USM Centre for Global Sustainability Studies (CGSS), Bayan Baru Community College and several other departments in USM which are directly involved in the organisation of the programme.

*Text: Mohd Azrul Mohd Azhar  
Translation: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin  
Photo: Islamic Centre USM*

## USM, Yale University Scientists Conducted First Ever Controlled Study, Finds *Ketum* Effective in Relieving Pain in Humans

B. Vicknasingam (PhD '05)

A team of scientists from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) and Yale School of Medicine, USA conducted a pivotal placebo-controlled, double-blind, randomized trial, enrolling a group of 26 volunteers to critically assess the effects of *ketum* on pain tolerance.

The study was led by Professor Dr. B. Vicknasingam, Director of the USM Centre for Drug Research and Professor Dr. Marek C. Chawarski from the Yale School of Medicine.

Results examined from the study revealed that the use of *ketum* may improve tolerance towards pain.

However, further rigorous research on *ketum* pain-relieving properties and its safety profile is still needed.

The findings, published in the June 2020 issue of Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine (YJBM) provided the first objectively measured evidence, obtained in a controlled research with human subjects, that are preliminarily supporting or confirming the pain relieving properties of *ketum*, which were previously only anecdotally reported based on self-reports in observational research.

*Ketum* or kratom in English (scientific name: *Mitragyna speciosa*) has a long history of traditional medicinal use in Southeast Asia and has more recently gained popularity in the US and many other regions of the world.

**“The USM Centre for Drug Research has been conducting research on *ketum* for more than a decade and has been a leader in the field, with more than 80 scientific papers published on *ketum* or its active compounds.”**





**“The recent widespread popularity of *ketum* and the controversies concerning potential toxicity, as well as potential addictive properties and the uncertainty of the overall safety profile of *ketum* provided a fascinating example of increasingly urgent need for rigorous scientific investigations of the plant’s effects on human health.”**

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Besides the alleged therapeutic effects, issues relating to potential toxicity and fatal incidents that have been reportedly attributed to *ketum* products, and potential addictive properties of *ketum* or its active compounds, are frequently debated within the scientific community and among regulatory agencies in the US and in other countries.

Although *ketum* has been used in Malaysia for more than a century, its recent widespread misuse has prompted the government to propose an amendment to the Poisons Act 1952 to introduce more stringent measures that will prohibit cultivation, production, distribution, and consumption of *ketum* with legal consequences and severe penalties.

The recent widespread popularity of *ketum* and the controversies concerning potential toxicity, as well as potential addictive properties and the uncertainty of the overall safety profile of *ketum* provided a fascinating example of increasingly urgent need for rigorous scientific investigations of the plant’s effects on human health.

At the same time, rigorous, controlled research on plant-based medicines is lagging far behind traditional pharmaceutical research and efforts toward the development of new synthetic medicines.

Plant-based medicinal research has been hampered by the lack of scientifically sound methodologies, lack of funding, and the dearth of promising findings.

The USM Centre for Drug Research has been conducting research on *ketum* for more than a decade and has been a leader in the field, with more than 80 scientific papers published on *ketum* or its active compounds.

The Centre received funding from the Ministry of Education of Malaysia under the Higher Education Centre of Excellence (HiCoE) Programme to conduct the current *ketum* research.

Having a long-standing collaboration with Yale University provides the Centre with a unique opportunity to advance its research towards *ketum* medicinal development if conducive research and commercial contexts for *ketum*-based medicines can be established.

The USM Centre for Drug Research is currently exploring various models of research and commercial development to advance the scientific foundations and medicinal development efforts toward *ketum*-based medicines or treatment interventions.

The US National Institute of Health (NIH) has a strong interest in supporting *ketum* research and is currently funding universities in the US to conduct a broad range of studies.

*Text: Professor Dr. B. Vicknasingam*  
*Photo: Mohamad Zaidi Jaini*

## USM, VITROX to Strengthen Academia-Industry Linkages

Following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) on 16 December 2019, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) continues deepening ties with ViTroX Corporation Berhad, as the USM Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan visited the company founded by a USM Alumnus, Chu Jenn Weng (B. Eng '93).

In the recent visit on 30 September 2020, Chu briefly shared on how ViTroX came on the scene, what it has achieved, and what the future promises. Chu reiterated that in a world where there is rapidly-changing technology, automation will surely help to meet the demands. However, in order to improve the current technology, a continuity of R&D is crucial, and companies are seeking for automation processes.

"Most of the technology companies export more than 60% of their products and ViTroX specifically exported more than 85% overseas. We could see that technology-equivalent companies are accepted by major multinational corporations (MNCs) around the world and that provides the technology companies with a competitive advantage," he said.



**Planting organic plants along the corridor**

**"Most of the technology companies export more than 60% of their products and ViTroX specifically exported more than 85% overseas. We could see that technology-equivalent companies are accepted by major multinational corporations (MNCs) around the world and that provides the technology companies with a competitive advantage,"**

Owned, managed and staffed by Malaysians, and with its home-grown technical expertise and its world-class products, ViTroX is now venturing into smart agriculture to help the farmers.

"We are trying to revolutionise agriculture in Malaysia, using natural resources and eliminating the use of pesticide; and V-Farm Automation, a modern vertical farming system will enhance agricultural yield and minimise the usage of resources. We are planning to work on harvesting with USM in the near future," Chu added.

Welcoming the future collaboration with ViTroX, the USM Vice-Chancellor then related on how to embed the practice of collaborating with industries into the undergraduate programme to enable the students to share their ideas and talents more effectively.

"USM is looking to offer education courses that provide students with real-life work experiences where they not only apply academic and technical skills, but also enhance their employability.

"USM is committed in gearing towards more changes and intends to employ people from the industry on secondment basis to the campus," said Faisal Rafiq.



**USM team capturing input sharing from the industry**

He also said that USM will be changing the curriculum in order to ensure that the students will remain relevant with industrial needs. USM students will be required to sit for computational and design thinking courses from the first year, regardless of which field of study they have enrolled in.

Agreeing with this, Chu shared that ViTrox intends to expand its wings to build the ViTrox Institute of Technology and currently the company is one of the key collaborative partners in the newly-offered Bachelor of Technology (Hons) Electronic Systems WBL (Work-Based Learning) in Universiti Tun Abdul Razak (UTAR).

“The greatest challenge we often face is getting talents that match the skills. Most of the graduates do not seem to be industry-ready. It is an advantage if the students are closer to the industry and have a good understanding of how the industry works even before they graduate,” Chu added.

Faisal Rafiq also highlighted that USM now is making it compulsory for academicians to undergo their second sabbatical with the related industries and expose the students to a startup ecosystem.

Reaffirming USM’s commitment and appreciation towards its 500-over collaborative partners, Faisal Rafiq acknowledged that it is essential to have university-industry collaborations in the era of artificial intelligence (AI) in order to keep abreast with the latest developments and trends.

“We have to start changing the way things operate. With the rapidly-changing technological advancements, it is even more important for the university to work with the industry to know about the changes in technology and how we can introduce good fundamental knowledge in different disciplines of studies to the students, so that our students will be equipped with skills on problem-solving, the grit to grow and to work hard,” he added.

**“We have to start changing the way things operate. With the rapidly-changing technological advancements, it is even more important for the university to work with the industry to know about the changes in technology and how we can introduce good fundamental knowledge in different disciplines of studies...”**

ViTrox, which is owned, managed and staffed by Malaysians, was founded by Chu and Steven Siaw Kok Tong (B. Comp. Sc '95).

The name is a combination of two words, “vision” and “electronics”, reflecting the lofty ambitions they had right from the very start. The duo was joined by Yeoh Shih Hoong, (B. Comp. Sc '97), also an alumnus of USM who turned down offers from big name companies to team up with them.

“I joined ViTrox after foreseeing the vision and determination from both of them. I can learn more by working in a startup company. Besides, the big companies will not be affected if I decline their offer.

“After 20 years, we have managed to provide job opportunities to a few hundred individuals, and I can see that more local technology companies are coming up to provide job opportunities, and indirectly we could build more local MNC companies,” said Yeoh.

Accompanying the Vice-Chancellor were the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Professor Dato’ Ir. Dr. Abdul Rahman Mohamed; Director of Industry Network, Associate Professor Dr. Yeoh Fei Yee; Director of Research Creativity and Management Office, Professor Dr. Lee Keat Teong and several officers from ViTrox and USM.

*Text/Photo: Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal  
Editing: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin*



## USM Introduces 3-minute Drive-through Registration for New Students as Covid-19 Cases Rise Sharply

On 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) introduced for the first time a drive-through registration process for new students that would only take three minutes to complete.

The whole process would require a student to undergo health screening, register at the MyDaftar application by scanning a QR code and watch a short online tutorial video while seated in their vehicle until they reach their respective hostels to drop off their belongings.

USM Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Development Affairs and Alumni), Professor Dr. Aldrin Abdullah said the initiative was in line with the new norms' standard operating procedure (SOP) to curb the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"The University tries to make the best of the current uncertain situation which is quite worrying, by coming up with some proactive measures and making them simple for all to follow.

"For example, the registration through the MyDaftar online system only takes less than five seconds; it is a very innovative system developed in-house by a team of IT experts from the USM Centre for Knowledge, Communication and Technology (PPKT) and this is the first time it is being implemented," he said.

Aldrin had earlier gone to the ground to monitor the drive-through registration process for the new students in the 2020-2021 academic session which began today at the USM main campus here.

**"The University tries to make the best of the current uncertain situation which is quite worrying, by coming up with some proactive measures and making them simple for all to follow."**



*Deputy Vice-Chancellor welcoming new students during drive-through registration*



*Jumiati Masud ferried her eldest child, Muhammad Izzulhaq Mohamed Hasnan all the way from their home in Simpang Empat (Seberang Perai Selatan on the mainland of Penang), across the Penang Bridge on a motorcycle*



*Muhammad Izzulhaq (top) and Nurul Huda (left) reading the welcoming card from the Vice-Chancellor*

USM took the drastic measure to do away with face-to-face registration and resorted instead to online registration.

The university had issued a statement urging both new and senior students to register online and postpone their trip to the campus.

However, for new students who were already on their journey heading to the campus, they were given three options -- register and return home with their parents/guardians; register, leave their belongings in the campus and return home with their parents/guardians; or register and stay in the campus.

Meanwhile, USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan who had also been closely monitoring the registration process, was well pleased that the process had gone smoothly and was impressed with the commitment shown by all the committee members and student volunteers led by the Division of Student Development Affairs and Alumni (BHEPA), while adhering strictly to the stipulated Covid-19 SOP and guidelines.

For the record, some 200 new students completed their registration at USM in the morning session.

*Text: Tan Ewe Hoe  
Photo: Shahnizam Ab. Rahim, Nor Amin Zainal Kamaruddin  
and Ebrahim Abdul Manan*

**“... for new students who were already on their journey heading to the campus, they were given three options - register and return home with their parents/guardians; register, leave their belongings in the campus and return home with their parents/guardians; or register and stay in the campus.”**

The Alumni Development Centre (ADC) would like to extend our gratitude to the alumni that have contributed to our **"Gift of Time"** project. The contribution was done by either volunteering in the **Alumni Iconic Talk, The Alumni Insights** or any other initiatives. We are especially thankful to many of you whether from our alumni group and friends or organisations as well as individuals who have financially aided the University in this project. We are most grateful for all of your contributions and support.

Who are these people responsible for all these contributions that we have been receiving?

Most of our donors are alumni who are appreciative for the benefits that they have received here; whilst others are peers who have come to know, admire and love USM. Our donors have supported many of the education and researches in USM, by funding fellowship and scholarship programmes. Others help support our physical facilities (such as Azman Hashim Sports Arena) as well as creative endeavors for student groups and other various activities.

We sincerely thank all of you that have contributed regardless whether it's in the form of time, effort or finance. Further contributions are most welcome as for every single contribution; no matter how big or small; your contribution can help make a difference to either a student, faculty or staff. If you wish to know more on how you can help contribute or for any further inquiries, please do not hesitate to contact any of our staff or you can drop an email at [dir\\_alumni@usm.my](mailto:dir_alumni@usm.my)

*"The quality of your life will be determined by the quality of your contribution. When you work to improve the lives of others, your life improves automatically."* – Kurek Ashley

Thank you and Stay Safe.

**Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal**

Coordinator  
Alumni Development Centre



Pusat Pembangunan Alumni (PPA), Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) telah menghadiri Bengkel Pemerkasaan Pusat Alumni Universiti Awam dan Mesyuarat bersama Jabatan Pendidikan Tinggi pada 6-7 Ogos 2020.

Teks: Syahnaz Riza Sukor



read more



**Pintu Rezeki Luas Bagi Yang Berusaha Keras**

Cabaran untuk menyambung pengajian sambil menunaikan tanggungjawab lain terutamanya kerjaya dan keluarga amatlah sukar. Hanya yang cekal, tabah, sabar dan mampu menyerap segala tekanan akan berjaya menggapai impian tersebut.

Teks: Nor Rafizah Hj. Md Zain



read more





# Adopt Your Hostel Room @USM

alumni.usm.my



Respected USMians,

As part of the alumni, some of our fondest memories are of the days we've spent in the hostel. The hostel rooms we occupied became the first port of call during the visit of any alumnus to the campus, particularly the ones who would visit the campus after a long while. So much so that the hostels are dear to our hearts....

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**Bank: CIMB Bank Berhad**  
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**Swift Code: CIBBMYKL**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Kindly return the form to:  
Mrs Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal  
**Alumni Development Centre**  
Building D02, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 11800, USM Pulau Pinang. Tel: 04 - 653 4796 / 4790



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## Mesyuarat Agung Tahunan

Persatuan  
Alumni USM  
(PAUSM)  
Kali Ke-24



Persatuan Alumni USM (PAUSM) telah mengadakan Mesyuarat Agung Tahunan ke-24 di Dewan Pembangunan Siswa 1, Kompleks Cahaya Siswa, yang dihadiri oleh para alumni dari Pulau Pinang, Perak, Selangor dan negeri lain di Semenanjung. Mesyuarat tersebut dirasmikan oleh Timbalan Naib Canselor HEPA Profesor Dr. Aldrin Abdullah selaku alumni HBP '94.



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## Lovin' Local

Everyone's first semester at university is bound to be different. It's a major step up from high school bringing new friends, new places and new experiences. My experience has been a mix of both positive times and challenges which I had already anticipated before starting. I've decided to share my experience so far.

As a bachelor student and now as a PhD candidate, I have been having an awesome time in USM with or without COVID-19, although it hasn't changed much of my routine life except that I miss the people I used to have fond memories with, contacted with and chatted with, who have all made USM special to me.

Bachelor life was like a rollercoaster for me so many ups and downs in the first, two semesters and then I got used to the campus, got new friends and had amazing experience in my department (School of Languages). Some of the perks of studying in a language school is that you get to see different people from almost anywhere. (Thais, Chinese, Arabs, American and others) and you get to learn new cultures and languages day by day.

I remember it was my first internship that I had in USM and I joined the Public Relations Office at the time when it was located at the Chancellery Building. As an Iranian student, I had no idea how to work with Malaysians till I met the officers who were warm, friendly and exciting. Every day was a new motivation and challenge for me to be at the office. I never regretted waking up early for work. Besides the lovely officers and the boss, I enjoyed every bit that USM offered me. Writing as an alumni, I am proud to be where I am standing now and honoured to be a student at USM. So far it has been amazing. I have learned and experienced so many new things in such a short period of time. Apparently good things have gone by so fast.

**Mina Seifi (B. Arts '17), Iran**

*Editing: Isyam Amran*



## Embrace The Challenge

I started my journey as an active student in USM by joining Adikarma USM as one of the main dancers during my first year. From there, I started to have the opportunities to join cultural programmes and competitions, both national and international levels. From all these experiences, I got to travel to many countries including Australia, China, The Philippines, Indonesia, Thailand & many more, which then became the platform for me to explore more on cultures and sharpen my soft skills. I grew a lot in Adikarma USM particularly.

Other than Adikarma, I was also a varsity USM debater. I started to be trained as a debater since my first year & I joined few national level competitions. My highest achievement was the debate tournament in 2017 when I won the best debater award and my team won the first runner-up in D'Bayu Debate Competition in UKM.

Through all these experiences namely Adikarma, debate and some others that I didn't mention, I have been shaped to be a greater person especially in terms of my communication, confidence, technical skills, management and many other skills. There are many awards that I have received as a result of my hard work and commitment but the satisfaction of completing my degree life with meaningful experiences is actually more valuable than any award. Lastly, I have experienced much hardship but believe me - 'the greater the challenge, the greater the result' - so never give up and always believe in yourself.

**Jerry Yacob (B. Arts '19), Sabah**

*Editing: Isyam Amran*

# Penang Girl

## Made The University and The Whole Nation Proud

*Cheah Phaik Yeong  
(B. Pharm. '98)*

Dr. Cheah Phaik Yeong, 46, is keeping the nation proud for being the first Malaysian woman who topped the title of Associate Professor of Bioethics and Engagement in Oxford University since 2016. She is also the current head of the Bioethics and Engagement Department at the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit in Bangkok, Thailand.

Cheah went to St. George's Girls' School for her secondary education, before getting her Degree from USM at the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences. From the similar alma mater, she also obtained her Ph.D (Pharmaceutical Sciences) in 2002. She then worked in Kuala Lumpur (KL) which became a stepping stone for her to be who she is today. Back then in KL, Dr. Cheah applied for a vacancy at the University of Oxford and she was accepted! The rest is history.

Having been with Oxford University since 2005, Cheah now heads the Bioethics and Engagement Department at the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit in Bangkok. Her work essentially focuses on ethical issues emerging from conducting research and working with vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant women, migrants and other disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations. Besides, with COVID-19 being the highlight since the earlier part of this year, Cheah's current project is an international study on economic and social impacts on COVID-19 and its public health measures.

**“Her work essentially focuses on ethical issues emerging from conducting research and working with vulnerable populations such as children, pregnant women, migrants and other disadvantaged and hard-to-reach populations.”**

Not many people know about University of Oxford's hub in Bangkok. It is part of the Nuffield Department of Medicine, University of Oxford. Embedded within Mahidol University, the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU) is more than 40 years old. A lot of researches were conducted on malaria and other tropical diseases. There are a lot of COVID-19 researches being done as well, parallel to the current coronavirus-plagued issues.

One of the projects that Cheah run in MORU through the collaboration with Cambodian authorities and local Cambodia theatre group was a village drama in Cambodian remote provinces. The Village Drama Against Malaria project was held in Sien Pang district, Stung Treng province for almost a month-long (25 Feb – 29 March 2018) and was presented in ten villages with some being very remote areas close to the border of Laos. The awareness-creating project aimed to engage the targeted population about malaria prevention and early treatment as well as infant vaccination through the beauty of arts.



Research conducted in the MORU Network on Mother and Child Health aims to improve the chance for mothers to survive delivery, and for healthy infants to survive the neonatal period and to thrive.

Source: <https://www.tropmedres.ac/research-areas/maternity-childhealth>



At the Department of Bioethics & Engagement, we conduct ethics research such as how to ethically involve children, pregnant women, migrants and other under-served groups in medical research.

Source: <https://www.tropmedres.ac/research-areas/bioethics-engagement>

**“From the vast experiences working in clinical researches for a long time, the crucial key to the success of a clinical trial is through identifying and addressing the ethical issues.”**

She is also involved in a recent randomised clinical trial by MORU called COPCOV Trial. With more than 40,000 health-related front liners who worked in close contact with COVID-19 patients enrolled, this study focuses on the effectiveness of chloroquine and hydroxychloroquine in COVID-19 infection prevention and severity reduction. This trial commenced in Thailand in early April and has been expanded to multiple sites worldwide.

Ethical issues are inherent in clinical researches. From the vast experiences working in clinical researches for a long time, the crucial key to the success of a clinical trial is through identifying and addressing the ethical issues. This can be very essential to improve the research quality and translate the evidences found through clinical trials to enhance patient management.

“Ethical principles are universal”, said Cheah.

Her work involved a Thailand-majored overseas research programme comprising of vulnerable populations and neglected diseases in lower income settings. Translating the universal ethical issues has become an exciting challenge for her. Cheah became passionate about operationalising these ethical guidelines in lower income settings and vulnerable populations. This allows good researches to be done in these settings. However, there is a need to contextualise these principles to make them practical for patient recruitment.



**In a community engagement programme**

“Working on ethics is more enabling than disabling. Ethics can aid scientists to look at their studies in a different light when conducting their researches in ethically-charged situations. Among many, I found the area of empirical ethics and research by engaging community on clinical trials as of utmost importance”, said Cheah.

“Work hard and dream big! Don’t let being a woman or being Malaysian or anything stand in the way. If there is an opportunity, I would love to come back and serve. I graduated from USM, am proud to be a Penangite and a Malaysian”, she added.

Thank you, Dr. Cheah Phaik Yeong! You’ve made us proud. You lead, USM leads, WE LEAD!

*Text: Angel Goh Wei Ling*

*Editing: Tan Ewe Hoe & Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin*

*'Confluence of Events'* by  
Norfatimah Yusof (B. Arts '19)

*'My Journey'* by  
SM Raja (B. Arts '19)

*'Revisited Kuala Lumpur Series'* by  
TC Liew (B. Arts '09)

Artworks by The Alumni

# Uncertainty Dissolves

*'Rabak Melayu'* by  
Maizul Affendy Baharudin  
(B. Arts '05)

*'Alteration of Bakawali'* by  
Nor Hafizah Rosli (B. Arts '19)

*'Petal Lotus 1-9'* by  
Amirul Alwi (B. Arts '15)



*The artists with (standing from right) Dr. Sarena (Deputy Dean, Reseach & Innovation), Dr. Mumtaz Begum (Dean, School of Arts) and Dr. Tetriana (Fine Arts Chairperson)*

“Without any ideas, I am thinking why we should always have to create something with plans or ideas? Humans plan and prepare before doing something but for arts, should we? How about no idea is an idea”, said Khor Teong Siang known as Moses Khor.

Moses Khor is one of the participants involved in an art exhibition called Uncertainty Dissolves. The exhibition was organized by School of Arts with collaboration from Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah (MGTF). It comprised of artworks by 18 Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) alumni of Fine Arts. The main aim of the exhibition is to rediscover and showcase the artistic changes materializing from these alumni ever since they left their school.

Many of us are starting to speak of a ‘new normal’, an implicit acknowledgement that things will not and perhaps might not return to the way they were before. What could the ‘new normal’ for Malaysian art look like during and after the pandemic? Uncertainty Dissolves was originally planned to showcase its gallery from 18 March 2020 to 10 April 2020. However, galleries, like every other business, have had to indefinitely postpone future projects and it’s generally expected that social distancing measures may continue. Hence, submitted arts were showcased at MGTF from 1 July 2020 till 29 August 2020.

**“The theme Uncertainty Dissolves was chosen to find out how the artists overcome creative obstacles, rules and restrictions and how lines are bent. The alumni portrayed their ideas in drawing, sketching and installation of their own creativity and research.**

**“Many of us are starting to speak of a ‘new normal’, an implicit acknowledgement that things will not and perhaps might not return to the way they were before. What could the ‘new normal’ for Malaysian art look like during and after the pandemic?”**

The theme Uncertainty Dissolves was chosen to find out how the artists overcome creative obstacles, rules and restrictions and how lines are bent. The alumni portrayed their ideas in drawing, sketching and installation of their own creativity and research. The Vice Chancellor of USM, Professor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan had the opportunity to meet a group of USM Art School alumni from 2009 until 2019 who exhibited their works at the exhibition "Uncertainty Dissolves". These alumni actively exhibit as full and part time artists.

“I am very excited about their initiatives and works, I also appreciate those who took the time to attend and support the exhibition. I understand some of the alumni are now among the most talented young painters in Malaysia, some of whom even made the work as one of the main sources of income” said Faisal Rafiq.



**Dr. Tetriana explaining the artwork content to the Vice-Chancellor**

**“This relaxing session with the Vice Chancellor transpired some ideas and things that can be highlighted for the development of the field of Fine Arts for the future generations who are studying or who will continue their studies at USM.”**

Norfatihah Yusof who graduated in 2019 exhibited Confluence of Events and said that she enjoyed every stage of the alternative photography process. The struggling and fragileness of handling such creation and being alone in the darkroom carrying out experiments always fascinate her and push herself to the core.

This relaxing session with the Vice Chancellor transpired some ideas and things that can be highlighted for the development of the field of Fine Arts for the future generations who are studying or who will continue their studies at USM. “Fine arts is very wide, as you can see here today there are huge scopes of arts using a variety of sources. That’s what makes it wonderful as I can always challenge myself on how to translate my thoughts into a canvas or restructured panel” said Noor Hafizah Rosli.

Hafizah exhibited the technique of extending conventional painting beyond the static image limit by using acrylic on a restructure panel. The elements of touch, movements, illusion and reflections support her work into an interactive artwork by approaching the subject in different ways.

During the nearly two-hour session, the Vice-Chancellor also visited the exhibition to see for himself the artworks of the alumni which had been on display since the beginning of last July until August 29.



**Moses Khor introducing his "No Idea" to the Vice-Chancellor**

**“Art is essential as a connection to history, to the way we lived before, and to past generations’ ideas of beauty, truth, the sacred and profane. Quoting from Aristotle “the main aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but also their inward significance.”**

“Art is essential as a connection to history, to the way we lived before, and to past generations’ ideas of beauty, truth, the sacred and profane. Quoting from Aristotle “the main aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but also their inward significance”, said Fine Arts Chairperson, Dr. Tetriana Ahmed Fauzi.

She added that the exhibition aimed to showcase the young and undiscovered talent hailing from the School of Art undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. The artworks included painting, drawing and mixed media and highlighted aesthetic representation of self, issues of identity, culture and exploration of media.

Among the participants who participated were TC Liew (B. Arts ‘09), Khor Teong Siang (M. Arts ‘12), Afzanizam Mohd Ali (M. Arts ‘19), Ermy Shahira Zaihan (B. Arts ‘18), Nor Hafizah Rosli (B. Arts ‘19), Ain Munirah Ahmad Kamil (B. Arts ‘19), Putri Intan Sari Amrizal (B. Arts ‘19), Muhamad Amir bin Mansor (B. Arts ‘16), Hana Tan Kai Ling (B. Arts ‘19), Norfatihah Yusof (B. Arts ‘19) and Muhammad Riduan Raja Yunus (B. Arts ‘19).

*Text: Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal*

*Photo: Mohd Fairus Md Isa*

*Editing: Isyam Amran*



## Dari Negeri Cik Siti Wan Kembang Ke Pulau Mutiara

### Norih Kental Hadapi Cabaran Membina Kerjaya

*Norih Mohamad (B. Humanities '84)*

Beliau berasal dari negeri Cik Siti Wan Kembang namun jika mendengar tutur katanya seakan-akan sukar untuk meneka kerana dialeknya tidak begitu berbunyi seperti loghat 'Kelate'. Keadaan ini mungkin kerana setengah daripada umurnya beliau sudah jauh merantau dan berbakti di luar negeri Kelantan.

Yang dimaksudkan ialah Mantan Ketua Timbalan Pendaftar Kanan, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Norih Mohamad yang telah menamatkan perkhidmatannya pada 30 Oktober 2020. Memulakan kariernya seawal tahun 1984 setelah menamatkan pengajian, beliau yang juga lulusan USM dalam jurusan Sastera (Major Komunikasi-Minor Pengurusan), Norih tidak pernah menoleh ke belakang sehinggalah ke hari persaraannya setelah 36 tahun menabur bakti dan keringat. Mengimbu kenangan pada awal perkhidmatannya, anak kelahiran Bachok ini mengakui pada mulanya keinginan untuk berkhidmat di Kampus Kesihatan USM amatlah tinggi.

**"Saya bercita-cita sangat hendak balik ke Kelantan. Namun siapa sangka, sehingga pencen saya kekal di negeri 'nasi kandar'. Walaupun begitu, saya tidak pernah kesal kerana terlalu menyayangi USM."**

Malah, ketika ditemu duga beliau tidak malu-malu untuk menyatakan hasratnya untuk bertugas di negeri kelahirannya. Namun, hasrat menggunungnya terkubur kerana ditawarkan tempat bertugas di kampus induk, Pulau Pinang. "Saya bercita-cita sangat hendak balik ke Kelantan. Namun siapa sangka, sehingga pencen saya kekal di negeri 'nasi kandar'. Walaupun begitu, saya tidak pernah kesal kerana terlalu menyayangi USM. Banyak yang saya belajar di sini dan saya pun sudah selesai dengan suasana di Pulau Pinang, sejak zaman bergelar mahasiswa USM sampailah sekarang," ujar beliau. Norih melaporkan diri di Bahagian Hal Ehwal Akademik (HEA) pada tahun 1984 dan berkhidmat di sana sehingga tahun 1991 sebelum dinaikkan pangkat dan ditempatkan di Bahagian Sumber Manusia (1992-2004).



*Noriah menyemak rutin harian bersama Setiausaha beliau, Diana Fariha.*

**“Dalam kerjaya ada pasang surutnya, ada cabarannya dan saya selalu bersikap positif terhadap segala cabaran dan meneruskan kerja seperti biasa. Paling penting berusaha memberikan hanya yang terbaik.”**

Beliau turut menyambung pengajian ke peringkat sarjana dalam bidang Pentadbiran Perniagaan di Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). Sebaik kembali bertugas, Noriah ditempatkan di beberapa pusat pengajian sebelum perkhidmatan terakhirnya di Jabatan Pendaftar. Dipendekkan cerita, beliau yang mendirikan rumah tangga pada usia muda sebaik tamat pengajian tidak pernah menyesal dengan suratn yang telah tertulis. Terus mengorak langkah, Noriah tidak menoleh ke belakang malah memberikan yang terbaik dalam bidang tugasnya. Beliau menjalankan tugas-tugas pentadbiran dan pengurusan walaupun mengakui minat sebenarnya adalah dalam bidang yang berkaitan komunikasi termasuk perhubungan awam. “Saya pernah ditawarkan oleh pengurusan tertinggi untuk menyertai Unit Perhubungan Awam USM. Bidang ini antara bidang yang saya minati. Namun saya berasa sedikit terkilan kerana terpaksa menolak. Ketika ditawarkan, saya sedang sibuk membesarkan anak-anak yang kesemuanya masih kecil. Saya bimbang tidak dapat memenuhi tuntutan tugas dalam bidang perhubungan awam yang menuntut banyak pengorbanan khususnya dari aspek masa,” katanya.

**“Saya juga selalu berpesan kepada staf, kerja kita satu ibadah dan tanggungjawab yang perlu dilaksanakan dengan sebaiknya. Integriti juga sangat penting untuk dibudayakan kerana tanpa integriti maka lenyaplah nilai-nilai murni dan amanah yang perlu ada dalam setiap organisasi.”**

Mengulas mengenai cabarannya menggalas tugas-tugas mencabar sebagai ketua di tempat kerja dan dalam masa yang sama menguruskan keluarga, beliau bijak membahagikan masa dan menjadikan kedua-duanya sebagai faktor penting dalam kehidupan yang perlu diberikan perhatian sewajarnya. Noriah yang mendirikan rumah tangga dengan jejaka pilihannya yang juga alumni USM, Mohamad Nazri Musir telah dikurniakan empat orang cahaya mata. Mereka adalah antara anugerah yang tidak ternilai buat dirinya. “Tidak dinafikan, banyak pengorbanan yang perlu saya lakukan untuk menjayakan kedua-duanya iaitu menguruskan keluarga dan juga karier. “Namun, saya bersyukur kerana sehingga kini saya telah berusaha memberikan yang terbaik semampunya. Dalam kerjaya ada pasang surutnya, ada cabarannya dan saya selalu bersikap positif terhadap segala cabaran dan meneruskan kerja seperti biasa. Paling penting berusaha memberikan hanya yang terbaik. Saya tidak pernah mencampuradukkan urusan keluarga dengan tanggungjawab di tempat kerja,” katanya. Noriah juga terkenal dengan sifatnya yang tegas dan sentiasa fokus dalam tugasnya.

Mengulas lanjut katanya: “Fokus pada tugas penting kerana ia menjamin seseorang untuk mengurangkan kesilapan. Sebagai contoh, jika kita bertugas di bahagian data, jika tiada fokus dan ketelitian, ia akan menjurus pelbagai kesilapan yang dapat membahayakan pihak lain khususnya dan Universiti secara keseluruhannya.” “Saya juga selalu berpesan kepada staf, kerja kita satu ibadah dan tanggungjawab yang perlu dilaksanakan dengan sebaiknya. Integriti juga sangat penting untuk dibudayakan kerana tanpa integriti maka lenyaplah nilai-nilai murni dan amanah yang perlu ada dalam setiap organisasi.” “Saya selalu menjadikan ketua-ketua jabatan saya yang terdahulu sebagai contoh dalam menjalankan amanah sebagai pemimpin di tempat kerja.” “Yang paling saya ingat ialah Dato’ Siti Mazenah Saad, Pendaftar pada ketika itu.” “Sifatnya yang tegas dan profesional dengan staf seliaannya banyak mendorong saya untuk cuba mengambil pendekatan terbaik dalam berhadapan cabaran menguruskan pasukan.”



**“Saya lebih senang mengambil konsep kekeluargaan iaitu sebagai ibu bapa kita wajib menegur jika anak-anak melakukan kesilapan. Staf perlu tahu yang mereka bertanggungjawab atas setiap tindakan yang dilakukan,”**

*Noriah bersama pegawai-pegawai Bahagian Pengurusan Akademik*

**“Ini hanya kisah kecil mengenai ‘mek Kelate make budu’ yang berhijrah ke syurga nasi kandar untuk mencapai cita-cita dan membina keluarga bahagia.”**

“Saya sering berpesan kepada semua staf, jika saya masih menegur itu tandanya saya masih ambil berat dan peduli tentang mereka. Jika sebaliknya, keadaan itu bermakna saya sudah tidak kisah. Bukan bermaksud mengeneipkan mereka, namun ada kalanya ketegasan perlu untuk menjamin amanah yang kita galas dapat disempurnakan sebaiknya.”

“Namun, diam saya bukan sembarangan. Saya mengingatkan staf bahawa pada akhirnya ketika penilaian, saya mengambil kira semua faktor dan jangan disalahkan ketua jabatan sekiranya kita sendiri tidak amanah dan jujur dalam pekerjaan.”

“Saya lebih senang mengambil konsep kekeluargaan iaitu sebagai ibu bapa kita wajib menegur jika anak-anak melakukan kesilapan. Staf perlu tahu yang mereka bertanggungjawab atas setiap tindakan yang dilakukan,” katanya.

Beliau juga mengakui beliau bukan jenis yang gemar memendam rasa atau menyimpan amarah. Juga mengambil contoh mantan ketuanya terdahulu, Noriah mengambil pendekatan terbuka dalam menegur dan menerima teguran. Katanya: “Amarah jika disimpan hanya akan makan diri sendiri. Marah atas dasar kerja adalah lumrah, namun ia perlu berpada-pada dan tidak terbawa-bawa sehingga memudaratkan diri sendiri dan orang lain.” Noriah juga mengakui terlalu banyak kenangan untuk diceritakan sepanjang bertugas di bawah kepimpinan enam orang Naib Canselor, daripada Tan Sri Dato’ Musa Mohamad sehinggalah yang terkini Profesor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan.

“Cukuplah saya sekadar berkongsi bahawa satu ketika dahulu saya pernah berhasrat meninggalkan universiti kerana mahu mengikut suami yang bertukar tempat kerja ke Pahang. “Namun, setelah beberapa kali melakukan solat istikharah, rasa sayang dan cinta akan USM makin menebal sehingga akhirnya saya mengambil keputusan untuk terus bersama USM,” ujar beliau yang turut terkenal dengan keramahan dan senyuman manisnya ketika disapa rakan-rakan dan kenalan. Tambahnya mengakhiri perbualan dalam ketawa kecil:

“Ini hanya kisah kecil mengenai ‘mek Kelate make budu’ yang berhijrah ke syurga nasi kandar untuk mencapai cita-cita dan membina keluarga bahagia.”

*Teks: Marziana Mohamed Alias  
Foto: Mohd Fairus Md Isa  
Suntingan: Azlina Md Sadik*

**Ahmad Ghazali Md Kassim**  
(B. Soc. Sc. '75)

## Planning to be Your Own Boss?

**These are the Tips from a USM Alumni**

There are many reasons why some choose to strike it on their own. Most say they do so as they want better control of their destiny. They can work as hard as they want to. They can get out of rigid organisational rules that hamper innovation and creativity. Some people plan to be their own bosses since they have been forced out of there via retrenchment or job cuts and are unprepared for situations such as the fall-out from the recent pandemic.

So, if you're thinking of making this bold move or if you are forced into doing so, here is a Universiti Sains Malaysia Alumnus who is now managing her own company and will provide you with some tips to ponder upon.

Ahmad Ghazali Md Kassim, the Owner of AGK Capital Partners (est 1992) is someone whom many may not have heard before but when we discussed the business ventures of which he has been involved in for the past 28 years, there are qualities within him that have defined him for what he is now.

AGK Capital Partners is involved in listing and managing a plantation as well as a property company on the Bursa KL. He is associated with international brands here from the luxurious and sophisticated automobile brand Bentley to the flaming, mouth-watering fast food chain, Burger King. He was directly involved in developing a few ground breaking projects in the Klang Valley, and one of those is Metro Prima Kepong, a community(squatter) rejuvenation project for DBKL. Surely this is an extraordinary achievement by our local-based business entrepreneur, who was born in Penang and of course, proudly a graduate of USM.

**“Ahmad Ghazali Md Kassim, the Owner of AGK Capital Partners (est 1992) is someone whom many may not have heard before but when we discussed the business ventures of which he has been involved in for the past 28 years, there are qualities within him that have defined him for what he is now.”**

Ghazali (Bachelor in Social Sciences, 1975) is willing to share his reflections on his journey from setting up businesses to managing them for the sake of inspiring others.

### Why, What & When

We all know businesses have to be profitable to survive but understanding WHY (you want to embark on a particular business) is essential to ensure that you will be able to surmount any obstacles in your business journey, especially early on in the start-up phase (where 70% is bound to fail). Your mission in life (for someone thinking of making this life changing decision) is to ask “Does all this tie in your mission and goal in life?” Involving in a business that will bring economic as well as “social” profits can be a very magical feeling.

When searching and selecting opportunities, one must look at how to leverage one's strength and when choosing a certain product or service to offer, focusing on a certain market and segment is just as important. Next is to know the right timing and whether you should start during bad times when resources are easier and cheaper and then gradually step up your business when the economy improves.

**“We all know businesses have to be profitable to survive but understanding WHY (you want to embark on a particular business) is essential to ensure that you will be able to surmount any obstacles in your business journey, especially early on in the start-up phase (where 70% is bound to fail).”**

### Sustainability

Keeping it going and overcoming trials and tribulations are crucial. In navigating this journey of self-employment as well as employing others, there will be a lot of challenges which include prejudices and obstacles. So it's good to be well-prepared in sustaining startups (including on-line businesses).

Now it's relatively easy to start internet based businesses. The challenge is to sustain and grow your business. Ghazali also shared his advice on how to always put ourselves in the right attitude in order to succeed in business. He then said; “On the flip side of hardworking and committing to do something that we are passionate about, we must infallibly remind ourselves to be aware of the risks of getting carried away with greed and obsession.

When asked about how did he survive the challenges in conducting real-world business, Ghazali said perhaps the following are important though not exhaustive:

1. Stamina, courage (physical & emotional support from family & friends) & spiritual strength
2. Building trust and relationships among investors, clients and employees (all stakeholders)
3. Creating values all the time and making sure we bring to the clients more values than what they are paying for. A simple example is like bringing broadband to a squatter area like Kepong since 1998 (Project Fiber to Curb with Telekom Malaysia)

He also loves to use the ‘chopstick analogy’, whereby the upper side indicates the goal that you want and you think you are good at, and the lower part is your capability and competencies. “Both sides have to be synchronized to be able to pick up the food. The same goes to passion and capability. If you are not capable enough, go and learn, be an apprentice, then only will you be able to get through a meaningful journey both in business and in life,” he said. Never forget the motto “learn more to do more”.



### Success-forming Habits

When asked about the above, Ghazali was quick to say that there is no one single template. Diligence and the ability to put passion in what we do and “as I often said in all my career and journey sharing, we must first get our mindset right”. There are a lot of books on success-forming habits that we can refer to but passion will enable you to ‘paint and color’ the journey as how you want it to evolve with space and time.

Other equally important habits are: -

- Building trust and reputation and getting genuine relationships (among all stakeholders)
- Staying focused as there are many distractions out there
- Good timing management which assumes you can prioritize what to do first - I go by Pareto rule
- Able to adopt and adapt changes as they come
- Finding and keeping valuable partners
- Keeping a balanced life (material & spiritual)

### TIPS to Prepare for Setbacks

As in life, failures are part and parcel in business. Even success needs to be managed.

There is always the need to overcome business failures and disappointments. “When you’re up against the unexpected, do not feel discouraged. You have to have the energy and willingness to rise up and run the distance all the way and then only will you become stronger “If you fall, always learn to pick up the pieces and rebuild. That is the best lesson in life that we can learn. Treat failures as learning points,” he shared. Building self-confidence and having faith in your ability and sometimes a good mentor can help you identify and overcome your weaknesses.



*The Editors capturing their moment with Ahmad Ghazali and the limited edition Bentley Mulsanne W.O. Edition by Mulliner. It is one of 100 units made*

**“When you’re up against the unexpected, do not feel discouraged. You have to have the energy and willingness to rise up and run the distance all the way and then only will you become stronger “If you fall, always learn to pick up the pieces and rebuild.”**

### Inputs To Empower Graduate Employability

Competencies, skills, effective communication and other essential attributes that may lead someone to attain success are not built overnight. The same goes to this figure who has gained numerous achievements in his more than 28 years of venturing out on his own. Ghazali also mentioned that many of us actually did not get it right at the first attempt in our journey in life, be it in school, varsity or even in a career path.

“As long as there is a willingness to learn and acquire knowledge, you can achieve success. Back to what I have I learned in USM, it was compulsory for us to take one Asian language back then. That was so useful and it provided us with an additional value. For example, whenever I go to Thailand to discuss business, I try to use their language as an ice breaker and it does work most of the time.

Be unique! Those are the things that USM has taught us and would greatly benefit us!

“For the university itself, the internet presents as a big game changer. Information is readily available but curating knowledge in such a way that will make the graduate future-ready not only for their career path, but also for the whole wide world is the biggest challenge to the university stakeholders. Employers will surely ask what value can our graduates bring to the organisation? Try to empower the graduates and instill the core competencies that will make them better than others. So, the university must look at how future USM graduates could bring value to the potential employers and businesses or even social enterprises.

### Down Memory Lane In USM

According to Ghazali, USM has made him as what he is now. “USM has given me an opportunity to build a solid foundation that I will definitely not forget. “I may sound a bit emotional but the three years spent at the Minden Campus, enrolled in the Social Sciences programme had given me a good liberal arts background to understand my place in society, the people and how to be a good human being.

“The Vice-Chancellor then (Professor Tan Sri Datuk Hamzah Sendut) opened up the access to a very flexible education system. The major and minor programmes were available where you could do cross school studies (a good example was the HBP degrees); that is the good basic education we got those days. Of course, the VC also had brought in the resources from all over the world and we had the privilege to learn from lecturers from USA, Japan, Canada and so forth.

When asked about the top three things that he could not forget about his alma mater, Ghazali once again stressed on the good education they got back then with the multinational lecturers, the brotherhood they had built until now and the active student movement in his time.

On giving back as part of the gratitude for what the USM has given him, he has gladly taught at the off-campus center in KL in the 80’s as well as been supporting Alumni initiatives. Ghazali has travelled the world running case workshops for the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank. He has also advised the University of SC’s international business programmes. He is ever willing to guide young entrepreneurs and those wanting to explore ‘striking out on their own’. He can be contacted at agk888@gmail.com.

*Texts: Marziana Mohamed Alias  
Photo: Nor Amin Zainal Kamaruddin  
Editing: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin and Isyam Amran*



## USM, A Haven to Unleash Your Potential – Sandrageson



Spending near to four decades of his life with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), he uttered, “I used to be working as an office boy in 1979. Opportunity knocked on the door when one fine day, while I was doing my rounds despatching letters, someone asked me if I was interested to work in the Ministry of Education Malaysia (MoE). Without much hesitation, I agreed as it was not easy to get a government-sectored position then.”

A little offer unrejected made him who he is today.

Sandrageson s/o Vello, 59, or fondly known as Sandra, worked at MoE for four years before advancing his career in Hospital USM, Kubang Kerian, Kelantan as a hospital attendant on 2 July 1983.

### Knowing USM Through Sandra’s Eyes

Life has changed since Sandra started working in USM. Learning from people around him in the university environment has made him learned and discovered his hidden potentials better.

“USM is just like my second home. I enjoy working here, staying here and enjoying the environment here. To me, USM is an apt place to further your studies because it has a conducive environment for learning and working besides the picturesque surrounding greenery,” shared the Head of Administrative Assistant (N28), with his eyes glistened when asked on interesting things about USM.

### High Hopes Kept for USM

“I do really hope that the cooperation between the academic and non-academic staff can be kept strong in USM as they play equally crucial roles to shape our students as future leaders. We need to be good role-models to the students,” he said.

To Sandra, the utmost importance he would like to emphasise to his colleagues is to work with professionalism, high integrity and commitment aligning with the five core values/tenets of USM. Working together and taking time to understand each other better can made the impossible possible.

*“Always work truly from the heart and expect nothing in return.” – V. Sandrageson*

*Text: Marziana Mohamed Alias and Angel Goh Wei Ling*

*Editing: Tan Ewe Hoe*

*Photo: Ebrahim Abdul Manan*



read more



*Siti Salina Mohd Din  
(B. Mgmt. '03)*

## The Alumni Insight >> Madam Siti Salina Mohd Din

In every educational institution, strengthening and maintaining the bond between the students and alumni are always necessary, especially because the students can obtain many insights from the former students.

There are many ways you can give back. Your experiences, expertise and knowledge are valuable! When alumni volunteer their time to share information and knowledge with current students about their education, career choices, and transitioning to life after USM, USM students will have the opportunity to connect with USM alumni and gain knowledge about their future career.

The AI is aimed to build personal development, as well as skills and knowledge. Alumni can help students, academics and staff to be a force for positive change, as critical, creative, caring and collaborative thinkers and doers.

**Madam Siti Salina Mohd Din is currently the Head of HR & Administration at NGC Energy Sdn Bhd, with over 17 years' experience and being accountable in various roles in Human Resource spanning local, national and regional levels in multinational Oil & Gas corporations. During her student days at USM, she was actively involved in many activities, which earned her many awards as listed below:-**

**“When alumni volunteer their time to share information and knowledge with current students about their education, career choices, and transitioning to life after USM, USM students will have the opportunity to connect with USM alumni and gain knowledge about their future career.”**



view website



### Awards

- Anugerah Pelajaran DiRaja, Majlis Raja-Raja Malaysia 2003.
- Pingat Emas Canselor, Universiti Sains Malaysia 2003.
- Anugerah Pingat Emas Wanita Universiti Sains Malaysia 2003
- Gold Medal Award for achievement and excellence in university, United Malays National Organisation
- Anugerah Siswi Cemerlang 2003 by Persatuan Siswazah Wanita Malaysia.
- Kuala Lumpur Stock Exchange Foundation's Book Prize Award (Yayasan Bursa Saham Kuala Lumpur) 2003.

### University Involvements

- Represented USM for a paper presentation and participant, International Student Conference "e-Ducation without Borders 2003" in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.
- Represented Malaysia as Student Ambassador and Participant - 5th Hitachi Young Leaders Initiative, 29th July – 2nd August 2002, Singapore.
- USM Representative, Student Leadership Paper Presentation, 6th IMT-GT Varsity Carnival, 6th – 12th July 2002, Medan, Indonesia.
- Awarded a fellowship/student experience programme to Nihon Fukushi University, Nagoya, Japan. 2002
- Participant and Team member, 2nd SIFE National Cup, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.
- Exco Board Member, Majlis Perwakilan Pelajar USM (MPPUSM)–USM Student Representative Council, 2001/2002.
- Vice-President, the School of Management Society, Universiti Sains Malaysia, 2001/2002
- Participated in 'Program Wacana Malaysia 1' with the Minister of Education, YBhg. Tan Sri Dato' Seri Haji Musa Mohamad.
- Served as the Project Director, School of Management Magazine 2000/2001, Management Society, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

## Give Your Finest is the Tip for Success

*Ida Semurni Abdullah  
(B. Sc. '02)*

Building a career is an exciting step in our lives because it provides us a platform to build our own strength the way we want it.

Nevertheless, between the lines, somehow people might have been trapped in the beginning when they were not sure what exactly that they wanted to do and when they were afraid of how they can make a living.

This is more likely to happen to fresh graduates. When they seemed overwhelmed as they started to choose their field of study at the university, things might not go the way they wanted it when they start to embark on another journey in life, which is stepping into the working environment.

Recently, in an 'up-close and personal' interview session with our distinguished alumna who now holds the position of Vice-President of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group of High Technology (MIGHT), Ida Semurni Abdullah has given us an opportunity to dig deeper on how she has successfully reached the position she now holds.

Ida Semurni graduated from the USM School of Chemical Sciences in 2002. Then, she was a cheerful student and she believed that in order to become a successful person, one must have a sense of belonging in what they do, regardless of what his/her field is.

"They must put values in themselves and question how they can make a positive impact on the people around them, or even to the nation within the capacity of their careers.

**"...soft skills do give an extra credit to those who want to shine brightly in building their career path. Being a student will give us an opportunity to explore the potential that we have inside. Mix around, learn to interact with others and find the best way to communicate with regard to our insights."**

"Apart from that, soft skills do give an extra credit to those who want to shine brightly in building their career path. Being a student will give us an opportunity to explore the potential that we have inside. Mix around, learn to interact with others and find the best way to communicate with regard to our insights. Varsity life is not just about gaining knowledge, it's beyond that.

"Those attributes are the focus area that we might need to look into when we are joining the career sector. Until now, I still believe that having a sense of belonging in what you do will ensure that you give your commitment at the fullest," said Ida Semurni further.

Ida Semurni joined MIGHT in 2005, right after she graduated and since then, she has never looked back and started to build her confidence, until she had been recognised as the top management of MIGHT, an organisation that was formed to seek prospective business opportunities for Malaysia through strategic exploitation of technology.

MIGHT also ensures and empowers the success of its members and partners as they undergo the process of nurturing, expanding and building high technology capacity of the Malaysian high technology ecosystem by creating opportunities and building competencies.

“I would rather say, it is worth to face challenges as they shape us to become more resilient, flexible and even stronger. I have gone through various challenges when I started out as a research analyst prior to where I am now, whereby I am directly involved in assisting the Chief Executive Officer and President of MIGHT to execute our mandate.

“So the point I want to share with the students is, don’t be afraid of challenging yourself into doing something new. Whenever there are challenges, there will be opportunities too and the more you venture into something new, the more you will learn.

“It is okay if what you do is not in line with what you have learned at the university. Who knows, it might turn up into something you have never imagined before,” she said while sharing her view on how not to be too rigid when it comes to relying on their field of study.

**“I learned a lot. As a Chemistry student back then, I was used to analysing things. It is a good parameter as science has thought you to see things differently and of foremost importance was, we learned how to create a formula, the interaction and reaction.”**



**“...don’t be afraid of challenging yourself into doing something new. Whenever there are challenges, there will be opportunities too and the more you venture into something new, the more you will learn.”**

Ida Semurni also said, things which she had learned from Chemistry are pretty much related into the management line that she is involved in today, as she has to analyse and formulate a policy relating to the stakeholders.

“I learned a lot. As a Chemistry student back then, I was used to analysing things. It is a good parameter as science has thought you to see things differently and of foremost importance was, we learned how to create a formula, the interaction and reaction. This concept is rather practical to be applied in the management line as well. What matters is confidence,” she said.

Apart from sharing her experiences, Ida Semurni even shared her fond memories of USM. What she adores most of her alma mater is how beautiful it is now, the greenery and heritage surroundings that could not stop her from taking photographs whenever she comes to Penang.

“Other good memories were how we had to face (wild) monkeys that came in to the hostel and stole our food supply. That was funny back then.

“Last but not least, the beverage cafeteria that sold various types of fruit juice that you cannot find elsewhere back then. Located then only in Desasiswa Bakti – and it is good to hear that they are still serving juices there even until now,” she added.

*Text: Marziana Mohamed Alias  
Photo: Mohamad Alif Ismail  
Editing: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin*



# Architect When The Focus is More Than Just The Design

Datuk Ar. Ezumi Harzani Ismail is a member of the Focus Group in Dealing with Construction Permit (FGDCP) formed under PEMUDAH since 2012, a Board Member of Board of Architects Malaysia and Board of Engineers Malaysia. He was recently re-elected as the President of Pertubuhan Arkitek Malaysia (PAM) for the third term after completion of his presidency for 2017-2019 term. In architecture practice, he is a Director at Arkitek MAA Sdn Bhd, one of the larger architecture practices and a winner of various awards including PAM Architecture Awards, CNBC Asia Pacific Property Award, MIP Excellence in Planning Awards and BCI Asia Top 10 Architects Awards. In his career with Arkitek MAA, he led the implementation of many projects, including hospitals, apartments, offices and hotels.

He is also the recipient of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) President's Medal in 2019. Among the projects that he has been involved in throughout the country include The Curve Shopping Mall, Mutiara Damansara, Tenera Hotel, Bangi. Multi Media University (MMU) Iskandar Johor and Restoration and Conservation of Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad, Kuala Lumpur to Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage Office.

## Care to share what your success habits are?

I don't really have a specific habit, but one thing I always do is to learn by observing my parents and grandparents. My grandparents for example worked in a restaurant. They have to wake up at 4.00am every morning to prepare food in order to open their restaurant by 6.00am. From there, I learned to be an early riser. I have been practicing it in my life to take advantage of the earliest hours as it offers you the cool and calm surroundings. I would normally wake up at 5.00am to organise my daily tasks. I believe that if you start your day early and plan ahead, the rest of the day will follow and turn out well. That is a good habit that is worth replicating, especially to those who are always working on the move.

I am a hands-on person as I don't rely much on my secretary for assistance. That brings me an advantage as I believe you will have a broader and more insightful understanding of your business. This attitude of getting down in the trenches will also promote a good example to other employees.

Never stop learning. I am still catching up with the current technology and I sometimes learn from my children to stay agile with the latest trends and technology. The habit of venturing into something new and continuously learning will always lead you to develop good habits

**Ezumi Harzani Ismail**  
(B. Sc. HBP '94, B. Arch. '95)





*IDr Chris Yap Seng Chye (Interior Designer of PAM) taking a selfie with Ezumi and USM team*

**“Architecture is the combination of arts and science, and it offers more than just the physical aspects. I personally think that, real architecture is not just about developing an iconic building; it is also on the matter of solving human settlement issues.”**

**There are those who are studying Architecture and aiming to pursue it as their area of interest. What are the main attributes that students need to polish or learn to be in your line?**

Many will relate architecture with drawing, illustrating, painting and model-making. When I first joined architecture in USM, I used to have a similar thought on the course until I practiced it in the actual environment. Architecture is the combination of arts and science, and it offers more than just the physical aspects. I personally think that, real architecture is not just about developing an iconic building; it is also on the matter of solving human settlement issues. You can see in some developing countries, there are many remarkable buildings, yet there are many homeless people on the streets. Hence it is not just about creating buildings. This is one of the main attributes that a future architecture needs to consider and leverage upon.

When I was the advisory board of KL City Hall from 2015-2019, I learned a lot on managing the socio-economic aspects. I realised that managing a city is not just about providing the infrastructure and facilities, but it is also about being a problem-solver. Kuala Lumpur as you know has many homeless people and even after we have provided facilities and shelter for them, we still need to be able to change their mindset. We have to help by creating awareness on loving your city by making use of abandoned spaces, for example beautifying the back lanes and abandoned buildings.

**What are the skills that are necessary to start and sustain a persistent attitude in developing new ideas for an architect? (Obviously, having knowledge is a must) but other than that?**

It is not easy. It is not just the habit but also the survival skills that are very important. Of course, the first is to secure your job before you could polish your skills. This is where you learn how your senior officer manages a company. A good partner will always support and motivate you further. Communication is also very essential. When you start interacting with people, you will learn a lot on what are the areas you need to improve on and you will understand more about human behavior and their demands. Through all this, it will also help you to understand the clients' needs and their target market. You also need to understand the culture of the area involved.

I would advise future architects to be involved in a proper project to improve your skills and do some readings on the company profile and history before joining. I am a bit fortunate to start my journey with Arkitek MAA. Definitely there were ups and downs, but by starting as a Design Architect, I've gained a lot of insights from my seniors. And joining PAM (Malaysian Institute of Architects) taught me that PAM is not meant for developing architects only, but also in educating the public. Of course, it is easier said than done, but there is always a way. You always have to consult your seniors and colleagues and it will be wise if you could have some knowledge on policies involved.



Ezumi in his PAM office

**I always said “Don’t listen to your clients, you must understand your client”. This is because the client may not understand what they want. Learn to get every keyword when they express their ideas.**

**Creativity and innovation is a must in this era. What are the core values that you’ve embedded to your subordinates/colleagues that you can share with us?**

I will always remind my subordinates and my kids that we are living in a very competitive era. Hence, I will always encourage them to advocate quality of services and professionalism in carrying out their responsibilities. It is a challenge to get clients nowadays. When you are able to get a client, that is your opportunity to show the best of your skill set. Do not push them away with your inefficiency. Customer service skills are very important in handling clients. All clients need to be treated well, and they can help you in getting another client if you manage to complete the task on time and satisfy their needs. The word of mouth from one client to another can either build or break you.

Many practitioners show a lot of efforts to impress the client with their designs. I would advise to put more effort on delivering the best services and in making them happy. To be honest, it is not so much about designing a beautiful building, it is all about your ability and commitment that you offer to your client in order to retain them.

I always said “Don’t listen to your clients, you must understand your client”. This is because the client may not understand what they want. Learn to get every keyword when they express their ideas. You must be thorough and you must pay attention to the details of your client’s request. You will also need to assist your client with additional information on the cost-effective ways to work within a budget. For example, the advantage of using sustainable features in the projects – cost benefit.

**In improving the "work-ready student" in the public Unis, what is the bigger picture that students need to know?**

I have to say that students today design a lot better than the day when I was a student. Back in my study years, as we do not have computer graphics, getting information and reference were difficult. But, back then, the advantage was we were able to discuss every assignment by exchanging ideas from the seniors. Today, most information is just at your fingertips. By taking advantage of the latest technological advancements students are now able to build a great design.

However, back then in the University we were taught how to design a Museum, an Art Gallery, et cetera. In reality, how many Museums or Art Galleries are you going to build? You have to know that almost every firm will do terrace houses which we hardly learn in our student days. These are the mismatched aspects between what the Industry wants and what the University teaches.

It is wise to go back to basics and learn the fundamentals to erect a building. The knowledge regarding the foundation to erect a building is quite lacking among current graduates. Before you can design, you have to know how strong the building is going to stand. Many of us thought that is the engineering part, but in the real working situation, architects need to have the fundamental knowledge and measurements on all of this as well. That is why; you can see many buildings nowadays have problems with cracked cements, leakages, blockages et cetera. For example, an architect needs at least to know the ratio between cement and plastering, the thickness of the door and understand why you need to have certain ratios and the precise thickness before you build a building.

From my point of view, our students are probably too focused in designing iconic buildings. Until we forget architecture is not just about designing, we also need to be able to blend the building with its surroundings. It’s time to go back to basics. In USM, during the first and second year, you need to get yourself involved in the Integrated Studio, where we learned about Town Planning, Project Management, Building Laws and Safety Regulations and other basic knowledge in construction. From there onwards, we will get a better understanding on the construction side before we focus more on architecture in the third year. Hence in our early days, we would learn more on social sciences, human behavior and basic environmental concerns.



Bangunan Sultan Abdul Samad



The Curve Shopping Mall



Tenera Hotel



PAM building

Some of Ezumi's projects

**“I used to work for an architect firm under a project with one of USM's lecturer. I was given the opportunity to continue working there even after the semester had started. So, I had to learn to manage my time to work on studio projects while working.”**

**You are an alumnus of USM. What are the top 3 things that you cannot forget about USM and why?**

There are obviously a lot of memories in USM. But as an HBP student, we are “Hantu Balik Pagi”/“Hantu Tak Balikpapan”. I still remember one time, when we were rushing to complete the projects and we refused to leave the studio. We waited till the security guards do their rounds and switch the lights at 3.00 am in the morning. Quietly, then we went back to the studio and brought all the torchlight and table lights to continue working.

One thing I like about HBP, we have a traditional Malay House on campus and it is used as our Surau. We always go there for our prayers. That building taught us on the traditional architectural styles and elements, as not many of us have seen the traditional Malay House before.

And of course, the famous VC Rock, the place where I used to date my wife. Even until today, I will still go there to visit the VC Rock whenever I go to USM.

**Can you describe your experience in USM?**

Most of us come from a poor family background, hence why many of us chose to work during our semester break. I used to work for an architect firm under a project with one of USM's lecturer. I was given the opportunity to continue working there even after the semester had started. So, I had to learn to manage my time to work on studio projects while working.

But I managed to make use of the real work exposure and apply the knowledge during my final-year projects. Even though I didn't really spend much of my fifth year in the studio, I did however manage to share my working knowledge with my friends at the studio. I still remember sharing the knowledge during our final project; where they had to design a toilet. The finished design included a toilet bowl and a sink. However, they had somehow overlooked the floor trap design for waste water outlet. Like I mentioned earlier, most of the students thought this is the engineer's work. When actually, we as the architect needs to know where to locate the floor trap first before designing the other parts.

And of course, I remember Professor Dr. Aldrin occupying the studio next to me. He was my senior. The juniors and seniors were always so competitive with each other, which is a good thing. We have learned many things from our seniors. In HBP, you will need to share the knowledge among your colleagues and communicate a lot with each other. That is why most of us remains friends until now.

*Text: Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal  
Editing: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin  
Photo: Nor Amin Zainal Kamarudin*

*Naji receiving 'Anugerah Tokoh Amilin  
Kebajikan Kategori Wanita' Award, 2020*

## 'Yellow Flood' Tragedy Shaped Naji to be More People-Oriented



*Naji on duty at Wad 1 Berlian, Hospital USM*

Witnessing the troubles endured by a friend who is also a colleague at work, and who was badly affected by the flood, has opened the eyes of Naji Esah Hamzah, 33, a nurse who works at Wad 1 Berlian, Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

"That was the beginning of my involvement in doing welfare work, after seeing how my friend was affected and how her house was totally damaged, and no aid was extended to her by anyone.

"I helped to clean up my friend's house and offered much-needed assistance by using money from my own family savings," she said in describing how she first began.

Following that, Naji continued with her welfare work by actively doing health checks at no charge from home to home around the area of Kampung Padang Kala and Kampung Kubang Edang, apart from being involved as a volunteer in welfare and health missions organised by non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

"From 2015 onwards, I was mostly involved with health and welfare missions organised by Medicom Malaysia and Muslimat Medical (MusMed) around Malaysia, not only in the state of Kelantan, but also in other states including Sabah and Sarawak.

"As I am a nurse and I work at the maternity ward, I will mainly focus on aspects of health, and I have served on a panel in managing procedures for a safe childbirth process to the residents of Mabul Island who do not have proper clinic and hospital facilities.

"This is where a good knowledge-sharing session could reduce the risks and complications during the process of pregnancy, childbirth and post-natal care," she said further.

The sixth in a family of 11 children, she obtained her Nursing Diploma from the USM School of Health Sciences.

Amidst the bustle of daily life, between fulfilling her duties at work and caring for her parents who are in their senior years, it is not a barrier for her to be actively involved in community activities even though she needed to fork out her own money.

As a recognition for her determination and perseverance in serving society, she has been chosen to receive the 'Anugerah Tokoh Amilin Kebajikan Kategori Wanita' award in conjunction with the 'Hari Kebajikan Negeri Kelantan 2020', and which was presented to her by the Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, Dato' Hajjah Siti Zailah Mohd Yusoff at the Dewan Besar Balai Islam, Kompleks Islam Darulnaim.

When met after receiving the Female Welfare Icon award, Naji said that, she was truly grateful to be chosen as the recipient and expressed her utmost gratitude to her parents who understood her commitment.

"Apart from that, I would also like to extend my thanks to the Head Nurse of Wad 1 Berlian who has always supported me by setting a work timetable that would accommodate my time whenever I am involved in a programme.

"With this opportunity, I would also like to urge my fellow colleagues and friends, although we are busy with our daily routines, please spare some time to give a hand to those in need, as their smiles will surely bring joy in what we do," she said in ending the conversation.

*Translation: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin  
Text: Lailatul Hafiza Abdul Rashid  
Photo: Abdul Hasib Abdul Rahman*

## Membudayakan Gaya Hidup Sihat

## Pengarah Kampus Rasmi Barkakas

Pengarah Kampus Kejuruteraan, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Profesor Dr. Nor Azazi Zakaria telah merasmikan peralatan sukan jalanan atau *street workout*, Barkakas pada September yang lalu di Kompleks Sukan bertujuan memupuk serta membudayakan gaya hidup sihat dalam kalanganarganya.

*Teks: Siti Faizah Abd Halim*

*Foto: Muhammad Taufik Abdul Rahman*



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## 37 Tahun Basuh Linen Pesakit Hospital USM



'The Unsung Hero' atau wira tak didendang. Itu gelaran yang paling sesuai diberikan kepada pekerja pembersihan termasuk warga kerja di Bahagian Perkhidmatan Dobi (BPD), Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) apabila berdepan dengan wabak koronavirus.

Bukan mudah untuk mereka berada dalam situasi getir, namun demi amanah yang dipikul dan tanggungjawab yang perlu dilunaskan, membuatkan mereka lebih bersemangat membanting tulang dalam memastikan linen dapat disalurkan ke wad dan klinik mengikut keperluan.

*Teks: Nik Sheila Erini Che Mat Kamel*

*Foto: Abdul Hasib Abdul Rahman*



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## USM-ALPS Joint Laboratory A Major Boost for Cardiac Research

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Advanced Medical and Dental Institute (IPPT) received a major boost for cardiac research with the setting up of a joint-laboratory in collaboration with ALPS Global Holding Berhad, a fully-integrated biotechnology research, medical and wellness services company.

According to Dr. Tan Jun Jie, a senior lecturer at IPPT and visiting scientific consultant specialist to ALPS Global Holding Bhd, the USM-ALPS Joint Laboratory for Cardiac Research is the result of two research collaboration agreements (CA) signed a year ago with the biotechnology company.

“The idea of having this joint laboratory with ALPS is that, amid the financial limitations we face and with a shortage of funds for equipment, ALPS will station their high-end equipments in IPPT and in return, IPPT helps them to build profiles relating to heart research.

“Several state-of-the-art equipments with an estimated cost of RM1 million have been identified to be placed at the joint laboratory, and this will surely provide help to enhance cancer research at a much greater pace,” said Tan, who played a prominent role in the setting up of the laboratory.

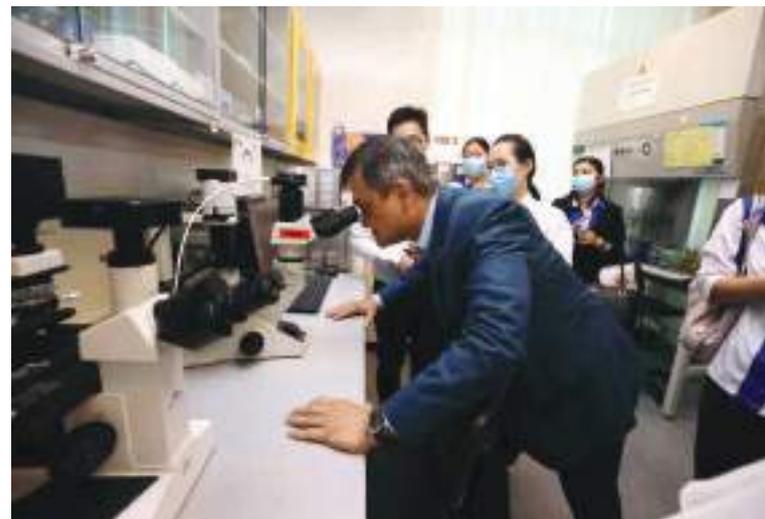
*Text: Tan Ewe Hoe*



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**The USM-ALPS Joint Laboratory for Cardiac Research was launched on 17 September 2020 by the USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan, in a simple ceremony that was also attended by the CEO of ALPS Global Holding Berhad, Professor Dato’ Sri Dr. Tham Seng Kong and IPPT Director, Professor Dr. Syed Azhar Syed Sulaiman.**



**Professor Dato’ Sri Dr. Tham Seng Kong during a tour in USM-ALPS Joint Laboratory for Cardiac Research**



## What Defines A True Hero: Resilience Moulds The Character Of A Future Doctor

Oftentimes it has been said that, 'character, not circumstances, makes the man'. It reflects the importance of character-building from young, and how it will shape and define one's life in the future.

Having a strong character is truly essential for this group of Malaysian students, currently undergoing the USM-KLE International Medical Programme (USM-KLE IMP), the USM offshore programme in Belgaum, India, more so when the world is struggling to deal with the outbreak of the life-threatening COVID-19 pandemic.

This group of students comprised of members from the Medical Society or MedSoc of USM-KLE 2019/2020. Led by its President, Zakry Mustaqim Yahya, the third-year student represents the voice of 365 medical students who have made their 'home' in Belgaum, in the Karnataka district, located in southwest India.

Commonly as with other societies, the MedSoc has 'council members' who provide overall leadership to the Society and several excos/committees, who are in charge of specified portfolios such as academics, welfare, sports and recreation, health, and spiritual growth in managing the wellbeing of the students there.

It is this group also, MedSoc 19/20 that is currently dealing with the effects of the life-threatening COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, which has brought worry and anxiety on to their doorstep.

*Text: Marziana Mohamed Alias*

*Translation/Editing: Mazlan Hanafi Basharudin*

**Having a strong character is truly essential for this group of Malaysian students, currently undergoing the USM-KLE International Medical Programme (USM-KLE IMP), the USM offshore programme in Belgaum, India, more so when the world is struggling to deal with the outbreak of the life-threatening COVID-19 pandemic.**



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# Ulang Tahun Ke-37 Terbinanya Masjid Al-Malik Khalid USM, Terpahat Pelbagai Memori Buat Warga Kampus

Selamat menyambut hari ulang tahun ke-37 Masjid Al-Malik Khalid Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

Itulah antara ucapan warga kampus USM buat masjid ini yang amat berjasa kepada masyarakat di dalam kampus mahupun sekitarnya apabila terbina di peta kampus USM Pulau Pinang pada tanggal 2 September 1983, sekali gus menyemarakkan pembangunan syiar Islam di USM.

Jika mengimbau kembali nostalgia sejarah pembinaan Masjid Al-Malik Khalid, ia telah mula didirikan pada awal tahun 1981 dan dinamakan Masjid Al-Malik Khalid sebagai menghargai jasa baik Raja Al-Malik Khalid yang merupakan pemerintah kerajaan Arab Saudi ketiga yang menyumbangkan sebahagian besar kos pembiayaan masjid ini.

Pembinaan masjid ini yang mengambil masa selama dua tahun, akhirnya siap terbina sekitar pertengahan tahun 1983 dan tarikh keramat 2 September 1983 menjadi detik bersejarah buat USM apabila Kebawah Duli Yang Maha Mulia Seri Paduka Baginda Yang Di-Pertuan Agong pada masa tersebut, Sultan Ahmad Shah al-Musta'in Billah Ibni al-Marhum Sultan Abu Bakar Ri'ayatuddin al-Muadzam Shah berangkat tiba sudi memperkenankan penyempurnaan Masjid Al-Malik Khalid USM.



**“Jika mengimbau kembali nostalgia sejarah pembinaan Masjid Al-Malik Khalid, ia telah mula didirikan pada awal tahun 1981 dan dinamakan Masjid Al-Malik Khalid sebagai menghargai jasa baik Raja Al-Malik Khalid yang merupakan pemerintah kerajaan Arab Saudi ketiga yang menyumbangkan sebahagian besar kos pembiayaan masjid ini.”**



Masjid Al-Malik Khalid



**“Pembinaan dan penghayatan masjid ini adalah berdasarkan konsep Masjid Quba’ yang diasaskan oleh Rasulullah S.A.W. iaitu menjadi institusi ibadah dan pembangunan insan yang mulia dan bersepadu untuk mencapai kecemerlangan di dunia dan kebahagiaan di akhirat.”**

Kenamaan yang turut hadir pada pada majlis istiadat perasmian itu ialah Seri Paduka Baginda Raja Permaisuri Agong Tengku Hajjah Afzan Binti Tengku Mohammad; Pro-Canselor USM pada ketika itu iaitu D.Y.M.M. Sultan Perak, Sultan Azlan Muhibuddin Shah Ibni Almarhum Sultan Yussuf Izzuddin Shah Ghafarullahu-lah, dan D.Y.T.M. Raja Nazrin Shah, Raja Muda Perak.

#### **Gabungan seni bina tradisional tempatan dengan seni bina Islam di Asia Barat**

Timbalan Pengarah Pusat Islam USM, Ustaz Zayd Zhari ketika ditemui sempat berkongsi maklumat buat tatapan umum beberapa intipati penting mengenai sejarah Masjid Al-Malik Khalid yang mungkin dalam kalangan warga kampus dan masyarakat umum tidak mengetahui susun galur sejarah tersebut.

Menurut beliau, masjid ini pada awalnya dinamakan sebagai Kompleks Balai Islam yang kemudiannya dinaikkan taraf sebagai Pusat Islam, USM sehingga kini.

“Pembinaan dan penghayatan masjid ini adalah berdasarkan konsep Masjid Quba’ yang diasaskan oleh Rasulullah S.A.W. iaitu menjadi institusi ibadah dan pembangunan insan yang mulia dan bersepadu untuk mencapai kecemerlangan di dunia dan kebahagiaan di akhirat,” katanya.

Berkongsi mengenai sejarah teretusnya idea reka bentuk Masjid Al-Malik Khalid, Zayd berkata reka bentuk ini ialah hasil rekaan Fawziah Lukas, Dekan Pusat Pengajian Perumahan, Bangunan dan Perancangan USM ketika itu yang bertugas sebagai arkitek di Akar Architects, Design, dan Research Consultants, Kuala Lumpur.

“Beliau telah menghasilkan sebuah reka bentuk yang menggabungkan seni bina tradisional tempatan dengan seni bina Islam yang terdapat di Asia Barat.

Hasilnya lahirlah reka bentuk bumbung yang curam dan bertingkat-tingkat, dihiasi pula dengan kubah-kubah keemasan dan sebuah menara setinggi 150 kaki,” kata Zayd lagi.

Jelas beliau gabungan demikian menampakkan keindahan dan kemegahan seni budaya tradisional Malaysia, selain memelihara warisan seni bina Islam yang lazimnya dapat dilihat pada bangunan-bangunan masjid di Asia Barat.

“Manakala keluasan dewan solat bawah yang dibina adalah seluas 8,262 kaki persegi yang mampu memuatkan jemaah seramai 1,100 orang dalam satu masa, seterusnya dewan solat atas yang berkeluasan 6,642 kaki persegi dapat memuatkan seramai 600 orang Jemaah dalam satu masa,” jelas Zayd lagi.

Tempat diadakan pelbagai majlis besar peringkat universiti dan negeri

Ketika ditanya antara majlis-majlis besar yang telah diadakan, Zayd Zhari berkata sudah semestinya pelbagai majlis telah diadakan di dalam masjid ini sejak 1983 termasuklah kehadiran ramai kenamaan yang hadir bagi merasmikan majlis yang dianjurkan oleh Pusat Islam, dan jika ingin dikongsikan cukup banyak untuk disenaraikan.

“Antara majlis besar terkini yang telah dilaksanakan oleh pihak Pusat Islam USM sebelum terjadinya serangan wabak Covid-19 ini adalah Majlis Sambutan Maal Hijrah dan Maulidur Rasul 1441H peringkat USM pada 31 Oktober 2019/ 3 Rabiulawal 1441H yang dirasmikan oleh Timbalan Ketua Menteri 1 Pulau Pinang, Dato' Ir. Hj. Ahmad Zakiyuddin Abdul Rahman, dengan kehadiran Naib Canselor USM, Profesor Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan; Pengarah Kampus Kejuruteraan USM, Profesor Dr. Nor Azazi Zakaria; Pengarah Pusat Islam USM, Tuan Hj. Ustaz Mohammad Shukri Osman, serta jemputan yang terdiri daripada ketua-ketua jabatan, kakitangan USM, pelajar serta anak qaryah Masjid Al Malik Khalid,” jelas Zayd lagi.

Dalam majlis itu juga, Pusat Islam USM turut melancarkan Projek Wakaf Karpit Masjid Al-Malik Khalid USM yang juga mendapat sokongan daripada Timbalan Ketua Menteri 1 Pulau Pinang, bertujuan menggantikan karpit sedia ada bagi keselesaan para jemaah menjalani ibadah. Projek itu menelan belanja sebanyak RM700 ribu.

**“Masjid juga tidak pernah lekang dengan pelbagai program harian keagamaan seperti khutbah Jumaat yang disampaikan oleh kakitangan profesional dan akademik, tadarus Al-Quran selepas solat zohor, Kuliah Maghrib, Kelas Pengajian Al-Quran dan Tajwid Dewasa.”**

### **Tempat dijalankan program harian keagamaan dan program bantuan komuniti**

“Masjid juga tidak pernah lekang dengan pelbagai program harian keagamaan seperti khutbah Jumaat yang disampaikan oleh kakitangan profesional dan akademik, tadarus Al-Quran selepas solat zohor, Kuliah Maghrib, Kelas Pengajian Al-Quran dan Tajwid Dewasa.

Zayd menambah, selain turut mengadakan program bantuan komuniti yang dilaksanakan oleh Masjid Al-Malik Khalid di peringkat tempatan, masjid turut mengambil inisiatif menganjurkan program menyantuni komuniti luar negara seperti yang terkini pada tahun lalu iaitu bantuan sumbangan Kit Maidaturrahman untuk penduduk miskin di Pattani, Thailand.

Ketika ditanya bagaimana nilai keterbukaan yang diamalkan oleh pihak masjid menyantuni warga kampus atau masyarakat luar yang bukan beragama Islam, beliau berkata Masjid Al-Malik Khalid merupakan masjid dwifungsi iaitu berperanan sebagai masjid qaryah dan masjid institusi.

Kehadiran jemaah masjid meliputi pelbagai jenis lapisan masyarakat dan bersempena dengan itu masjid mengambil inisiatif mengadakan program ‘Mosque Tour Week’ yang diadakan setiap tahun bagi memperkenalkan masjid USM sebagai ‘Penang Pyramid Mosque’ dalam sektor pelancongan di Pulau Pinang.

“Program ini bagi menarik minat warga asing atau masyarakat bukan Islam boleh hadir ke masjid membuat sesi lawatan dan mengenali masjid dengan lebih dekat. “Lawatan ini boleh dihadiri semua lapisan masyarakat dan disediakan jubah pelawat untuk dipakai oleh pelawat sebelum memasuki ke dalam masjid.

“Pelbagai wacana dan pengisian bersama komuniti bukan Islam juga diadakan bagi menghidupkan keharmonian silang budaya masyarakat setempat khususnya di Masjid Al-Malik Khalid itu sendiri,” jelasnya lagi.



### **Keprihatinan terhadap pelajar, staf dan masyarakat sekitar yang memerlukan bantuan**

Sebelum mengakhiri temubual, Zayd Zhari turut menyatakan keprihatinan dalam memberikan apa juga bantuan yang diperlukan kepada pelajar dan masyarakat khususnya kategori B40 yang merupakan fokus utama masjid bagi tujuan meringankan beban mereka terutamanya sekarang ini negara berdepan wabak Covid-19.

“Atas sebab itulah Masjid Al-Malik Khalid memperkenalkan ‘Kit Maidaturrahman’ iaitu bantuan yang diletakkan dalam kotak khas yang merangkumi barangan asas sara hidup iaitu minyak, beras, sos, kicap, gula, garam, uncang teh dan juga kopi.

“Orang awam atau warga kampus turut sama boleh memberi sumbangan sebanyak RM50 bagi setiap satu nilai harga ‘Kit Maidaturrahman’ tersebut,” jelas beliau lagi. Tambah Zayd lagi, Kit Maidaturrahman ini diberikan ketika program ihya’ Ramadhan dan juga program bantuan sara hidup berikutan wabak Covid-19 yang melanda negara kita sekarang ini untuk diberikan kepada golongan B40 anak-anak qaryah, warga kampus, dan juga pelajar.

Selain itu, dari sudut kebajikan pengurusan jenazah juga diberikan secara percuma tanpa sebarang bayaran terhadap anak-anak qaryah dan juga warga kampus USM. Maklumat lanjut berkenaan apa juga perkhidmatan dan bantuan yang disediakan oleh pihak Masjid Al-Malik Khalid USM, warga kampus dan masyarakat luar sekitarnya boleh menghubungi talian am Pusat Islam USM: +604-6533753 atau e-mel: mohammadshukri@usm.my.

*Teks: Mohd Azrul Mohd Azhar  
Foto: Ebrahim Abdul Manan*



**PERSONAL DETAILS**

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Citizenship:  Malaysian  Others (please specify). I/C Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Gender:  Male  Female

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Position/Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

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