

MARCH 2009 Volume 4 No.1

THE **LEADER**

ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA



**“Hello
Future...”**

ISSN 1675 - 0063



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The Leader is published quarterly by Universiti Sains Malaysia Alumni Liaison Office (ALO). Please forward your enquiries and comments to darr_wynn@yahoo.com or Tel: 604-6534 315.

Cover artwork by Alec Chin

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FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

In 1973 the first group of mass communication majors graduated from Universiti Sains Malaysia. Since then some of them have earned their bylines in newspapers, magazines, televisions, webpages and internet blogs. In addition to them is a smaller number of talented alumni, who, although were never trained in mass-communication, have demonstrated admirable talents in news-making and penning opinions.

These alumni have formed a force of their own in the media. They have made their lecturers and other alumni proud.

In recognition of this force and asset among us, *The Leader* has invited some of them to key-in their stories for this issue. However, owing to various constraints, we can only accommodate a limited number of articles.

Needless to say, please continue to give us feedback because your thoughts in the forms of articles, SMS messages and e-mails have helped us in shaping every issue.

The Leader would like to appeal to those who have photographs and old USM artifacts to share their treasure.

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Mohamed Talhah Idrus
B. Soc. Sc. '74



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Special Feature

Striking a Chemis

Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
B. Pharmacy '76

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

try

By nature, academicians are media-shy. Their world is generally kept away from the public eye.

They work diligently in their laboratories and lecture halls, 'castles' where they are free to exercise the spirit of inquiry without any inhibitions and interferences. In fact, in the interest of generating and disseminating knowledge, they can be anywhere. Indeed, knowledge creation is one of their three vital roles; the other two being knowledge dissemination and knowledge preservation.

Knowledge creation-dissemination-preservation is the nexus by which academicians and their institutions are exclusively judged by their peers. Their media are limited to academic journals, which are uniquely categorised according to academic standings and acceptance.

In a way, the cliché 'publish-or-perish' provides an indication to the expectation and rigour practised in the academic world relating to publications. Thus, their involvement with particular modes of the media is inevitable, rendering their work a reclusive air. It is not difficult, then, to see why they are generally regarded as snobbish, and their world often dubbed as the 'ivory tower'.

This is their state of affairs for a long time, underscoring the paradox of how irrelevant the mass media are to the academic community and vice versa. Actually, each operates rather independently of one another. On occasions when they intersect, they are confined to earth-shattering events and findings.

Creating blue oceans for the future

Special Feature



**DZULKIFLI
ABDUL RAZAK**

Second is the close association of Malaysia as a dominant, vibrant and progressive Muslim country. That it is part of the Asian economic dynamo puts it on a unique platform to reach out towards the emerging countries of the Emirates, for example.

Turning Malaysia into an Islamic financial and halal hub is something that is within reach, given the numerous initiatives. Again, this presents another opportunity for BOS where the Malay and Muslim communities have natural roles and advantages that could be leveraged upon.

Thirdly, given Malaysia's long history of interfacing with mainland China as a friendly trading nation offers yet another unique opportunity.

This was acted upon proactively by Malaysia when it became one of the first countries in the region to recognise the role of China and subsequently establish formal diplomatic ties.

INTELLECTUAL renaissance is the main take-home message that came from Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak's opening address at the Blue Ocean Strategy (BOS) seminar on education and training held recently.

This was contextualised within Malaysia's unique position in the intellectual world, based on at least six wide-ranging dimensions:

First is the rich, indigenous and diverse Malay archipelago that reaches out to no less than 500 million people of the Malay-speaking world. Indeed, in terms of numbers alone, it

Dzulkipli's weekly column in New Sunday Times

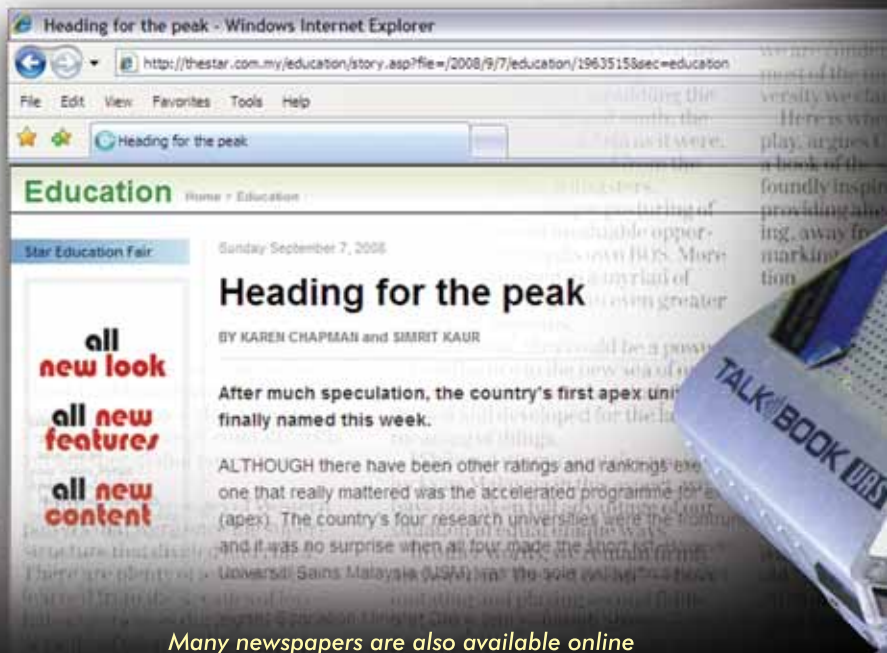
The meetings of academicians and the media often happen minimally, aimed merely at informing the public on the impacts of the findings. The occasions rarely focus on the nitty-gritty or the mechanics of discovery. They are not used to engaging or interacting with the public. Hence, it is understandable why the public views new scientific-related findings as 'magical', or shrouded in mystery.

To a certain extent, the general public has been identifying the scientists in this light. The latter's reputation has developed correspondingly with this perception.

Those days are, however, numbered. The university has been gradually but reluctantly shedding its exclusive 'ivory tower' image as it attempts to get closer to the community that they are supposed to serve. This is partly as a response to the demand made by members of the community who are getting more curious as to what the 'ivory tower' is all about.

Others regard knowledge of a university's operations as their right, especially if the institution is funded by the taxpayers. They want to be involved to ensure that their tax money is put to good use.

So it is not strange today, to find members of the public being represented in many committees of the



Many newspapers are also available online

university, and getting direct access to it. Vice versa, the university too is subjected to the influence of the community.

It is in this sense that the university, and the academic community are gradually opening up their doors to the mass media. This move is now regarded as part of an accountability exercise to keep the public in the know with the exception of confidential and copyrighted materials. With a sophisticated public, the demand for more information, supported by the ever more ubiquitous information communication technology (ICT) is even greater. This is already a common occurrence, the internet has broken down the barrier of the past to allow for greater understanding in an interactive way!

Initially meaningful communication was not an easy task to achieve. Suspicion has long existed between academicians and the public; and between universities and media organisation. This was exacerbated by miscommunications which often led to misreporting and misquoting which did not seem to go down well with the academicians. The situation further deteriorated when circulated reports brought disrepute and adverse publicity to the individual academician or the community. However, as both sides learned to communicate with one another, it gets better.



The Universiti encourages a symbiotic relationship with the media



In fact, some media professionals are now adequately trained to cover reports on the academia. Lecturers too are becoming involved in the mass media as columnists in magazines and newspapers. Indeed, dailies worldwide appreciate the contributions of academicians. Correspondingly, academicians use the mass media to assert influence on major issues that require their specialised inputs. A number of them are syndicated to do just that for added value to the particular media.

Universities nowadays are also more media-savvy, thanks to ICT. Many have well-organised public relations or communication departments that establish rapport with the mass media. By implication, the 'ivory tower' has been transformed into an almost seamless organisation that has an inherent interest in the welfare of the surrounding community.

Interaction has greatly improved since the days when the university was aloof from the community. It is therefore hardly surprising today to find universities competing with each other for space or time in the mass media. Some have even resorted to questionable methods bordering on a number of ethical considerations.

Additionally, all mass media have a section dedicated to education. This involved paid publicity to promote the institutions, degree programmes, educational events and personalities. As the demand for higher education increases, so does the demand for advertising space.

The university has forged a new symbiotic relationship with the media which can be harnessed to transform present education for a sustainable tomorrow. **L**



USM-based National Poison Centre works with the mass media on public health issues

In 1975, Professor Sharom Ahmat, then Dean of Humanities, welcomed me to the Mass Communication Programme (then under the School of Humanities). Also on hand was Dr. Leslie Sargent, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization expert and the Programme's chairman.

He showed me the make-shift audio studio, annexed to building C10.

"You mean this is where we are doing all our broadcasting?" I asked in disbelief for I was comparing it to the audio studios of the Radio House in Angkasapuri equipped with new, gleaming modern facilities from where I had just resigned.

Grooming Stars

R. Karthigesu

"Yep!" Sargent replied. "The equipment work pretty well, you know!"

I was to face my students the following day in a classroom at the Educational Technology Unit. My first lecture to the introductory course in broadcasting was all written and ready.

As an experienced broadcaster I have spoken to thousands of listeners over radio, but facing 20 students in a classroom was scary!

The students looked bored. I rattled on nevertheless with only a few jottings on the white board. There was no overhead projector, no slides. Forty minutes passed by. Whew!

"Any questions?"

Silence.

"All understood?"

Silence.



(Photograph courtesy of the School of Communication)



The former Communication complex at C10
(photograph from www.mindenbarracks.com/album.htm)

Grooming Stars

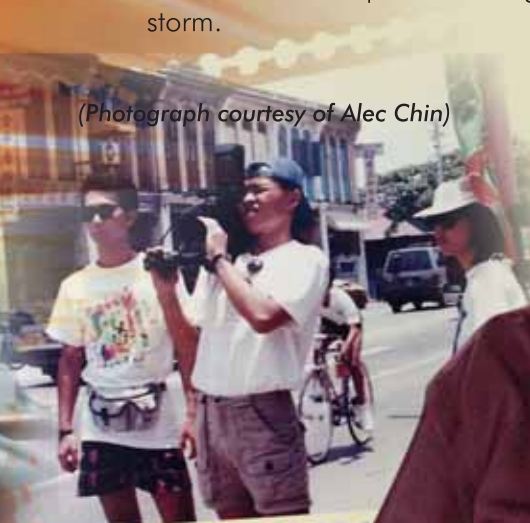
I was greatly encouraged by my flock. Just the perfect class. No need to be scared anymore.

The subsequent meeting was at the audio studio. To my surprise, the class was transformed into lively, curious, eager students who were keen to explore. I became more alive too, amidst equipment that I knew well. There was no need for written script here.

The majority of us stayed in the control room waiting to observe those in the studio. One student was handling the microphone. In my enthusiasm, I forgot to inform him the cardinal rule that my own trainers have told me.

Too late. The student knocked on the microphone twice. Hearing no sound he took a deep breath and blew into it hard. For those of us standing in the control room the speakers brought forth thunder and storm.

(Photograph courtesy of Alec Chin)



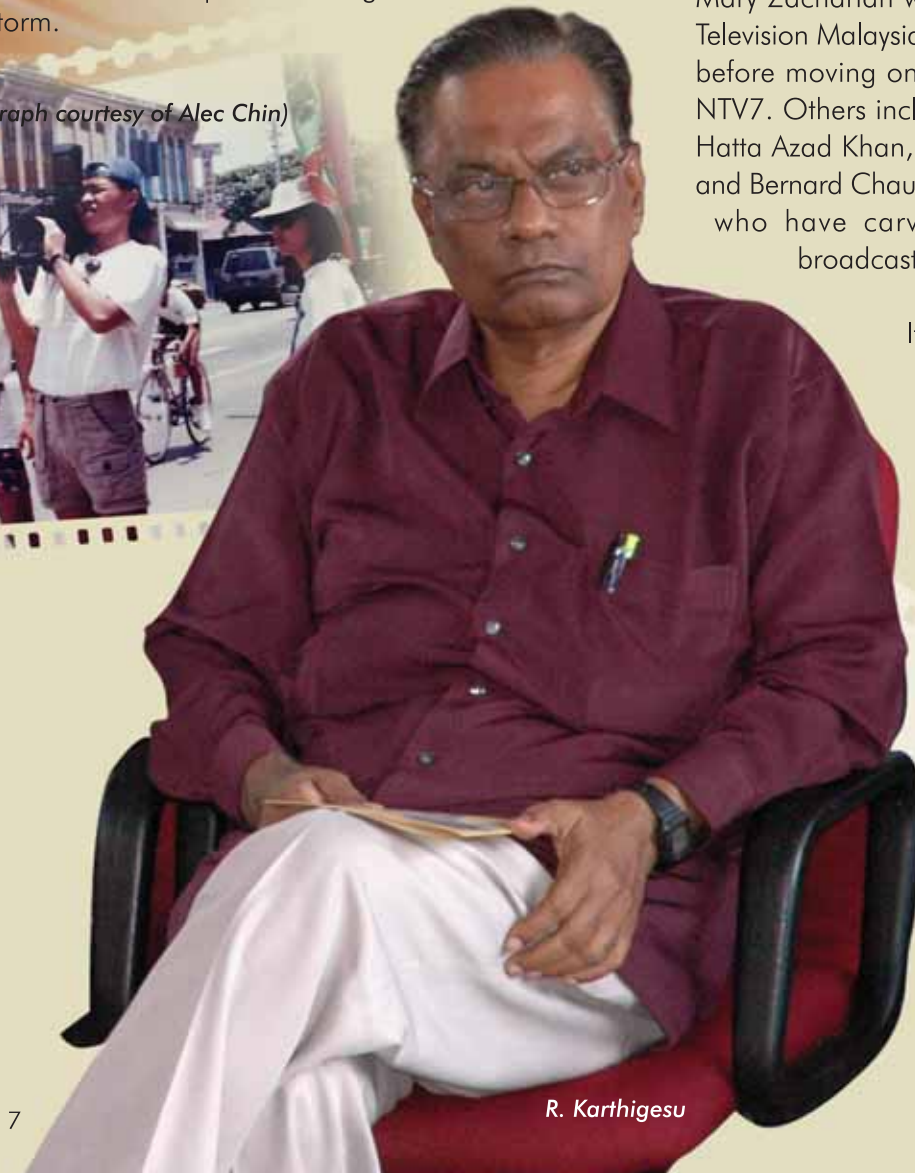
In alarm, I ran into the studio, "Listen, this is not a public auditorium. You are not going to hear anything except through the headphones. Do not knock or blow on the microphone, please."

I made certain I repeated this to every person who entered the studio.

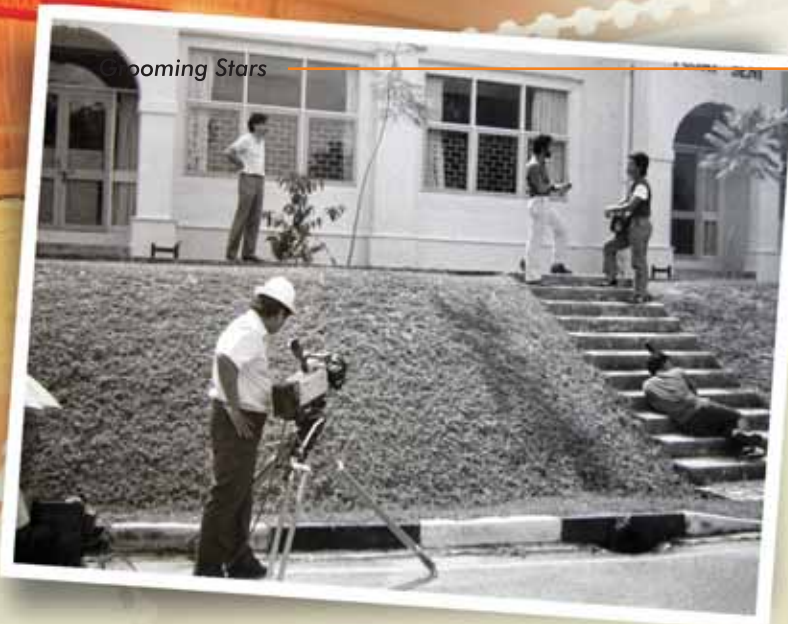
In my over 20 years of teaching broadcasting (that later included television) I have come across a number of great talents. Years later, when I saw them performing their duties in the TV stations, or the newsrooms or advertising companies or at incidental places, such as, the airports, supermarkets or bus stations, their faces would light up as they approached to remind me who they were. Was I proud and happy!

Mary Zachariah was an early newsreader at Radio Television Malaysia (RTM). Keith Liu worked with TV3 before moving on to CNBC. Hong Ju Khee joined NTV7. Others included personalities like Mohamed Hatta Azad Khan, Zainal Abidin (Zaibo), Syed Azidi and Bernard Chauhy. In fact, there are so many others who have carved a name for themselves in broadcasting and related fields.

It is equally rewarding to see some of the graduates who continued to acquire further degrees, training and experiences returning to the School of Communication as lecturers. Among them were Shanthi Balraj, Wang Lay Kim, Juliana Abdul Wahab and Mahyuddin Ahmad.



R. Karthigesu



(Photograph courtesy of Perpustakaan Hamzah Sendut, USM)

Some highpoints in the broadcasting class are worth recalling. Syed Azidi's film earned a place of honour in the 3rd Film Festival of International Cinema Students in Japan. Although the credit should go to his film lecturers, the inspiration to make the film was first mooted in the television class. Syed Azidi's enthusiasm knew no bounds. When his quota of film rolls was exhausted he used his own money to get more supplies to complete the film. Ramli Mohamed, then Dean, was generous enough to find extra money to process the film at Filem Negara.

The result was beyond his lecturers' expectations. Although there were technical and artistic flaws (and these might have caused him some points in the evaluation), the film was deemed fit to be sent to the Japanese International Students' Film Festival. His entry earned him a trip to the Festival, no doubt a valuable experience. The success impressed the Malaysian National Film Development Corporation (FINAS) to such an extent that it came forward with grants for future student films.


Another high point was when our entries won eight out of nine prizes for "Radio Production" at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) Students' Broadcasting and Film Competition.

One more great moment to treasure was the opportunity for our students to broadcast a weekly programme live from the Penang studios of Radio Malaysia.

Recollecting memories of my colleagues, what a cheerful team it was during those early years of the 70s. Vincent Lowe, then teaching advertising and public relations courses, was an old friend whom I have known from my broadcasting career as well as student days at University Malaya. Mansor Ahmad, teaching journalism courses, was very jovial. His was a well-known face because he appeared as a student riding his bicycle around the beautiful campus in an orientation video that was shown to all new students. There was Ramli Mohamed who taught development communication with his Indonesian counterpart, Ronny Adhikarya. Another colleague was Hamima Dona Mustafa who lectured introductory communication courses.



Video-editing session in the Communication laboratory
(Photograph by Yong Check Yoon)

On a rather sad note, I remember with much disappointment the School's failed efforts to institute a campus broadcasting station up to the time I retired due to government licensing regulations and protest from the students' union. 

What Say Us...

The issue (Vol. 3 No. 4) was great and attractive. But I noticed that those most featured were alumni working with USM. Did you not manage to get the others who are non-USM staff? Keep up the good work and we're looking forward to future issues.

Datin Faridah Hasan
B. Comp. Sc. '88

Chief Editor replies ...

Thank you for your observation. The Leader Vol. 3 No. 4 covers activities and USM staff in the various campuses. Past issues have also covered alumni personalities outside these campuses. We have departments such as Beyond the Gates of USM.

I like taking photographs and I adore most of the photos captured in *The Leader*. Through the magazines, I've learned to increase the techniques of capturing nice photos.

Nor Azman Shahiran
B. Comp. Sc. '00

The Leader is an outstanding publication containing information presented in an interesting format. The photographs are really attractive, 'alive' and meaningful. I believe this magazine will make good progress and continue to experiment with new concepts in the future.

Azlindar Romli

I seldom see Hamdan in the library. Now he's telling the world (by showing off his library card) that he was the only one going to the Library.

Ilangovan Suppiah
B. A. '74

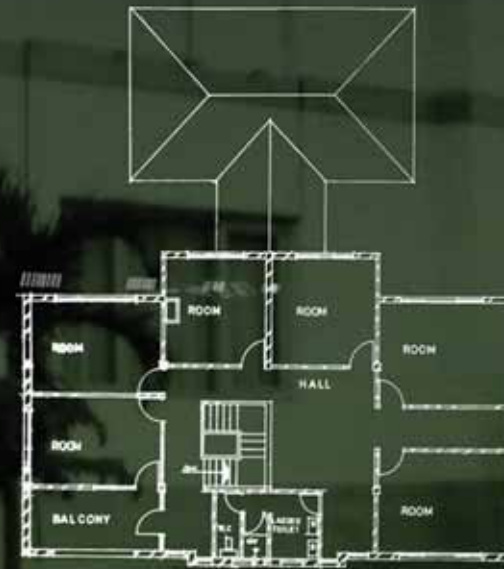
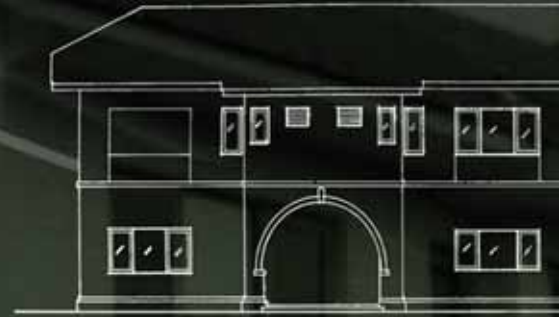
Chief Editor's note...

The comment is related to the photograph of Hamdan Omar's library card on page 7 of The Leader Vol. 3 No. 4

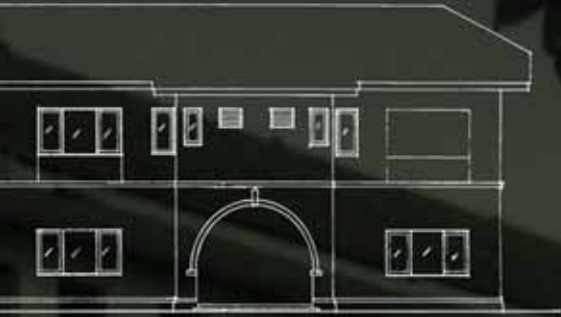
BLOCK

36

*Text and Photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin*

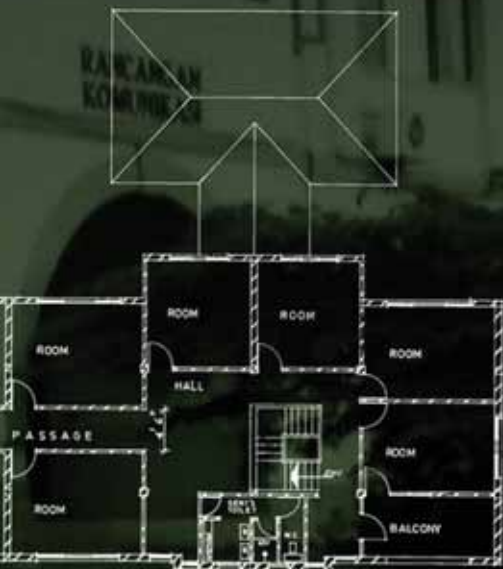


Block 36 (the old Communication building aka C10) evokes its own brand of presence. Perhaps it is the missing number '9' on its humble mark of 1938 or its physical setting at the edge of Lengkok Sastera that once overlooked well-kept verdant lawns and the picturesque distant wooded hills. To some, the ambience that pervades the building is one of nostalgia while others perceive it as a mere a behemoth structure tottering on the edge of disrepair like a dying elephant. Probably Block 36 is the unique fusion of all these.



Old photographs depict Block 36 as a majestic building that emanated firmness in its design, endowed with an aura of serenity and it encapsulated the sense that all things were composed into their proper shape. Even the site has a place in the hearts of the '70s cohorts. It is certainly the place that pops up in the mind of most pioneering students whenever it is mentioned as it began humbly as the first female dormitory on the campus in 1971.

The sedate and mellowed exterior of the two-storey building has a 120 feet long façade facing west. The building exudes a great sense of strength because of its two imposing arched entrances spanning 15 feet each which catches the eye of everyone who passes by.



C10's charm is simply captured in its visceral beauty and the people hitherto inspired by it. It has an attribute of plain beauty to those who see it, yet being able to remain 'invisible' - partially hidden by luxuriant foliage - to those who would rather not see it, adding a mystic touch and magic to the entire place. Nonetheless, C10 offers visual delight from whatever direction it is approached.

A former resident of C10, (now Datin) Siti Aminah Che Omar said, "It's now difficult to get that wind-swept panoramic view as it is being obstructed by the new buildings in front. The building 'spoke' of the things that had appealed to some of us. We shared some of the chores and fun staying there among good companions. Life at the dormitory was peaceful and we truly enjoyed the rejuvenating breeze. It used to have sprawling undulating lawns with clumps of *rambutan* trees."



A view from the rear of Block36 overlooking wooded hill (photograph from www.mindenbarracks.com/album.htm)

She recalled sitting with former dormitory colleagues (now Datin) Shamsiah Mohamad and Toh Siew Kee at their balcony during cool breezy evenings watching other students strolling by. When there were *rambutans* growing on the trees, the boys would raid the fruits - even if unripe - and former Vice-Chancellor (the late Tan Sri) Hamzah Sendut would come chasing after them. The girls in the dormitory enjoyed the hilarious hide-and-seek entertainment, watching them running helter-skelter like a scene from the Keystone Cops comedy.

Old prints suggest that it looked better in spacious isolation than it does now. Owing to the ubiquity of the surrounding buildings and the threadbare car park which have obscured the beauty of its glorious past, C10 is not what it was.

Today, C10 makes for a curious contrast. Having come to the end of its useful life, it is not uncommon for an old building to be unceremoniously coerced into changing and adapting for new development. The new renovation impairs and cramps the setting of C10. The cumulative developments surrounding the site further contribute to a significant loss of construction quality in the area.

Already it has undergone much tampering and alteration since the '80s. As new development programmes rapidly expanded, new extensions grew up behind the premise. As a result, the older parts of existing buildings consist of tightly packed spaces, often repeatedly modified and enlarged in a variety of styles or somewhat, ironically, completely devoid of any.

The on-going renovated building futilely attempts to project a sense of progress but on the contrary 'life' has been draining from it with brash - or even 'intrusive' - three-storey annex as its new replacement does not help. Such renovations helped to 'raze' the existing soul and character of C10. A sympathetic makeover, congruent with the style of the original building, perhaps would have been a better option. Be that as it may, it represented a new departure in the face of development pressures and was accomplished on rather limited resources, devoid of feelings. Oh, if only C10 could speak...



An arch being bricked up into a window

A damaged crucial portion of an arch

*Renovation works being carried out in the car park where **rambutan** trees once flourished*



Airy and spacious former dormitory rooms are partitioned for office spaces



Hardwood handrail of the staircase and the slate steps are vintage features




Recently installed air-conditioners spoiling the side facade



Walking around C10, one can observe that the character and robustness of the place is apparent, even though much erosion is taking place. The old building is the embodiment of virtue with good detailing, and workmanship, and it is infinitely more functional than many present day products.

C10 wore the mantle of times passed by that will never be recaptured. The importance of this building was a moral kind. It had twin purposes: of endowing a place with an identity, and its people with humility. These twin purposes must be re-discovered ... and fast before enthusiasm strips the final vestiges of a legacy. **L**

Rusli Jamaludin is currently a lecturer at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, USM. He can be reached at rj_hbpusm@yahoo.com



Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany, once said in one well-known quote that that if a lie were repeated publicly often enough, it becomes the truth.

During the Russian Revolution in 1919, Trotsky identified the media - like the defense forces - as one of the key public institutions to take over, if the revolution was to be successful.

Closer to home, where advertising and marketing are concerned, it has often been seen that he who shouts the loudest in the media wins the consumer war, regardless of quality. Obama's amazing march to the White House, and his disposing of 'institutions' such as Hillary Clinton and John McCain along the way, is a testament to that!

The media is indeed powerful, and those who control the media control the masses. You need a media presence to be noticed, to be known, to be respected and most importantly, to be believed.

I believe you can approach the media in two ways - you buy it by way of advertising or you can 'be it' by being the editor.

THE INK WELAS

Rajen M B. Pharmacy '86

I love to write, and writing has always come easy to me. As a student at the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, I was the editor of the official school magazine, *Farmakon*. I also helped edit the new organ of the International Pharmacy Students' Federation (IPSF), quite a feat in the early 1980s before the advent of e-mail and the internet. In fact, we even had to share a public computer!



Rajen (third right) has been an active contributor to USM development (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)

So when I started my business, writing came naturally to me. However, when I approached *The Star*, the editors were rather sceptical - they were not sure that Malaysians would want to read writings on health by a fellow Malaysian. Despite the initial scepticism, I was nevertheless given the chance. I was told to write for a month and would be allowed to continue if the feedback was positive. The feedback was good and thus I contributed for the next 11 years.

I have since moved to writing in *The New Straits Times*, *The Edge* (business paper), and took up the post as a managing editor of *The Journal of Tropical Medicinal Plants* (the only journal in the world focusing on tropical medicinal plants).

Three years ago, when the journal turned five, we organised an international conference on woman's health and Asian traditional medicines. I approached the USM Vice-Chancellor, Professor Tan Sri Dzulkipli to be our advisor. The conference was a success and we are now collaborating with the Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research of India, University of Hamdard, and the University of Mississippi.

My businessman friend, Verne Harnish, who helps entrepreneurs build their businesses once told me that "he who controls the ink, dominates the industry".

Well, I am still a long way from dominating the industry. The ink, however, has certainly helped! **L**

Rajen. M can be reached at health@po.jaring.my

As I write this article, there is a deafening roar of cars zooming in the background. Emotions are running high at the circuit, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for me to concentrate. I am sitting among photographers, videographers and journalists from all over the world who have congregated at the media centre of the Dubai Autodrome for the Toyo Tires 24-Hour Endurance Race. I can now proudly add another designation to my resume - public relations (PR) manager for Empire Motorsports, the first Malaysian team to participate in this endurance race, with a lean team of just 15 persons!



The Empire Motorsports team in Dubai after the 24-Hour Endurance Race

Friends in the industry often ask me, "Why do PR?"

My answer is, "Why not?"

Being an avid motorsports fanatic has made this career 'advancement' an easy choice. Let's face reality; how long can a television anchorwoman last in our local entertainment scene? Having something to 'fall back on' pacifies the heart and mind.

Do not get me wrong. I am still working freelance as a producer and TV anchorwoman for Media Prima. And I love my job. But I am in my early 30's. Age has caught up, there are new kids on the block - all talented, beautiful and eagerly waiting for a chance to prove their worth on television - and although my job is not at stake just yet, the truth of the matter is, this is how it works in showbiz. Out with the old, in with the new.

So here I am, trying it out as a PR person for the very first time. There is always a first, they say. Just as how I got my first job on television. Looking back, I can't help but smile (and sometimes cringe) at how I got here in the first place.





In action during the **Breakfast Show** on ntv7



Daphne M Iking
B. Comm. '01

Photographs courtesy of Daphne M Iking



I decided to take up mass communication, much to my father's displeasure. In his mind, he linked mass communications to singing follies and bad actors in equally bad soaps. But forgive his ignorance. We only had Radio Television Malaysia (RTM) in our village back then. I explained to daddy dearest that it was more than just entertainment. It was about investigative reporting and ethical news coverage. It was about being the medium of truth and/or working hand-in-hand with branding to market a product. Now come to think of it, that was just the greenie in me speaking.

Suffice to say, I had to work hard to pay for both my undergraduate and masters degrees. That was how I got into showbiz. I worked part-time in a number of jobs; as an event coordinator, a cabaret dancer, a small-time master of ceremony, just to name a few. I got my first break on TV after winning the *Ratu (Miss) Pesta Pulau Pinang Millenium*. I joined the pageant when my dance manager dared me to do it. The monetary prize enticed me into taking up the challenge.

A casting house then took my pictures and I landed a TV commercial a few months later. Fast-forward a year, I was offered a job at TV3 to do financial reporting, a forte I was not familiar with. But I quickly learnt the ropes, thanks to the huge help from the small unit I was blessed to be a part of. One thing led to another, and here I am today, a freelance TV presenter, journalist, producer, actress (occasional) and now a PR person. Oh... and mother to a one-year-old daughter.

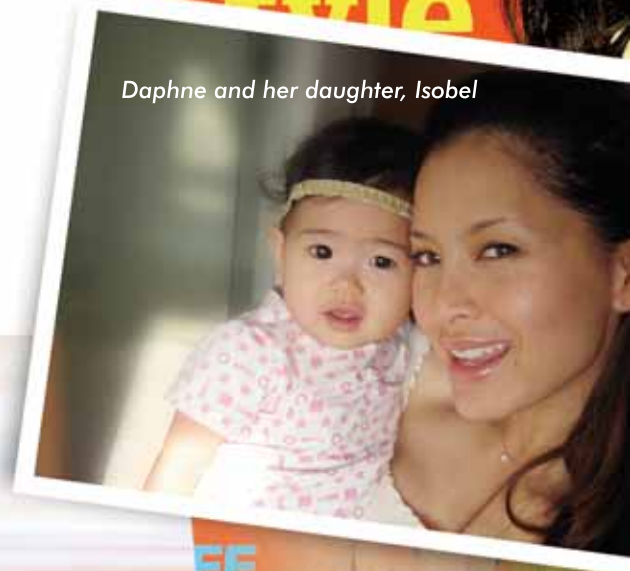


I take a quick glimpse at my BlackBerry and see a picture of Isobel displaying a toothless smile. Like any other mother, I start to worry. It's like a curse that befalls any parent who has given their own parents hell once upon a time ago. I live by G.K. Chesterton's motto, "I owe my success to having listened respectfully to the very best advice, and then going away and doing the exact opposite."

It is not that I do not respect my parents or that I enjoy challenging them and their views, I just like to follow my gut instinct. It might not always be right, but neither have I been wrong in most of my decisions either. Now that I am a parent myself, I fear that I won't be able to lead, guide and instill enough values to my daughter to enable her to make the right choices in her life, or to pick herself up after a bad fall.

Speaking of fall, I remember the time when I thought my media world was over. Being the only non-Muslim host on one show then, I was required to do a live interview on wine tasting. Now tell me, how exactly does one go about doing an interview on wine tasting without tasting the goods? Suffice to say, I was 'granted' a three-month leave without pay. As if that wasn't painful enough, I had to go through the ordeal of reading about my case in 'unethical' newspaper reports, in which people somehow made their own presumptions about my predicament. "*Daphne memperlui umat Islam kerana minum arak di khayalak ramai*" (Daphne showed disrespect to Muslims by consuming wine in public).

This reminds me of a journalist who got wind of the completion of my thesis and asked what it was about. Enthusiastically, I told the journalist about my concerns of the use of sex and foul language in cartoons and how disturbed I was. When it came out as "*Daphne suka cerita mengenai seks*" (Daphne loves sex stories), I was disappointed.



Daphne and her daughter, Isobel



Having fun during her internship with a Malaysian TV production house



Doing a commercial for a cosmetic product in Bangkok

Sensationalisation they say? My foot! Manipulated journalism is my conclusion. Perhaps again, it's just the naivety in me speaking. The sad point of being a face on camera is the unwanted extra attention received.

But it definitely has its perks. It has given me a platform to take a stand on going green. Or speaking my mind about our political scene (this time, I have mastered the art of not getting into trouble but still saying my piece, you have to tune in to the breakfast show on ntv7 to see how I do this!) Let us not forget the exposure it gives to other 'profitable' projects like emcee jobs, product endorsements and all those goody bags we received... new phone anyone?

But like I mentioned earlier, the 'shelf life' of a TV anchorwoman in this region is sadly limited. So, while I enjoy the ups and downs of my job, I have made a pathway for me to remain in touch with the media side of me, in a different capacity should the iron turn cold.

The results of the 24-Hour Endurance Race are out. Empire Motorsports, the Malaysian team have completed the race in eighth position despite being stuck at the pits for three hours due to a gearbox problem. It is time for me to start sending out my press release to the media back home.

As I try to finish this piece, my gut feeling tells me that my career advancement from TV reporter to PR guru stands a chance. Ultimately, this means that my instinct is once again proven accurate; just like how it told me to choose USM and the School of Communication several years ago. **!**

Daphne M Iking can be reached at daphne@empiremotorsports.com.my



ABDUL RAZAK
MAT NOH



AHMAD JOHARI
KASSIM



AHMAD MUBBARAKH
ALARAKHA



AINAN SULAIMAN



AMRAN ABDUL
HAMID



ANNE SAW POH GAIK



AWANG DAUD



AZMAH RAJION



CHAI MUN



CHAN LEAN SUAN



CHE AINA ABDUL
HAMID



CHE MINAH HARUN



CHEAH GUAT KHIM



CHEAH PEH YEAN



CHENG HOO
CHYUN



CHIN FHA



CHIN FOOK LEONG



CHIN MAI YING



CHONG BOON
HOW



CHONG CHOON
CHOY



CHONG HWEE
THENG



CHUAH LENG OOI



CHUAH SIEW AI



DALIA ARALAS @
DALIA HJ MOHD
IMRAN ARALAS



DING KONG LEONG



EE KONG HWEE



EIK KOK KUE



ENG SIW CHU



FATIMAH @ FATIMAH
AHMAD



GOH GAI AI



HABIBAH DOL



HABSHAH ABDUL
KUDUS

B. Sc. (Education) '82



HALIMAH HARON



HAMIDAH YUSOFF



HAMSAH SAEED



HO AH CHONG



IBRAHIM KHALID



JAMALUDDIN AHMAD



JAMALUDDIN
ARIFFIN



JAMALUDDIN
MANSOR



KAM TACK FONG



KHALIGUL ZAMAN
MOHAMED SHARIFF



KHOO CHIEW GAI



KUNG WING
CHUANG



KWOK LAI LENG



L. T. ELAGUPILLAY



LAI VOON HOONG,
MAGDALENE



LATIFAH RAJIMAN



LAU SEE SEE



LAU SWEE MUN



LIEW SOO CHIN



LIM SONG HOUK



LIM CHOOI SENG



LIM KWEE CHOO



LIM PUI LING



LIM SIOK CHENG



LIM TEK CHANG



LIM TENG CHWAN



LIM WENG SEONG



LIN EE NI



MAHANI MUSA



MARIAM ABBAS



MARIANI MOHD



MARY JOHN

B. Sc. (Education) '82



MARY LOURETT
PHILO D'SILVA



MASNAH ALIMUDA



MOHAMED ALI



MOHD JALIS MD



NAZLIZAH HASSAN



NOR HAYATI SAABAN



NOR PAIZIN IBRAHIM



NORHAPIHAH
ABU HANIF



NORIAH MOHAMAD



NORILA PILUS



NORSHAM MOHTAR



ONG GUAT NGOO



ONG JOO TIN



ONG KING LENG



ONG TEIK HWA



OOI BENG KEONG



OOI DEE IEM



OTHMAN HASHIM



PHANG SIN NAN



POH CHOON LAY



RAMLAH MOHAMED



REBIAH MOHAMMED



ROHANA ARSHAD



ROHAYAH JOHARI



ROHAYATI ALI



RUHANA ABDUL
GHANI



SAADIAH YAHYA



SALMAH ABU SIDEK



SAW KEW SENG



SEBAKYAH NATU
KHAN



SHAFFIE AWANG



SHARIFFAH AFIFAH
SYED ABBAS



SITI ALOYAH ALIAS



SOH BOON CHENG



SOH LAY PENG



SU HIONG AI



SUNDARAN
ANNAMALAI



TAJUDIN MOHAMAD
NOR



TAN BAK CHUAN



TAN SIANG KEE



TEH GEIK CHING



TEH PANG ENG



TEO SOON



TEOH CHONG KEE



TEOH INN SENG



TEOH SIEW GEOK



TOH POI SENG



TSIA WAI KIT



WOO WAI PUN



WOON LAI PEK



YAH MAMAT



YAP FEI LIN



YAP KIM MOY



YEAP HOCK CHYE



YEAP SAU BING



YEO ENG SIM



YEOH SENG KEE



YIN TAI CHIN



ZAINAB HUSSIN



ZAINI EMBONG



ZANINAH ABDUL
KADIR



ZAWIAH KASIM



ZUBAIDAH ENDOT



Birds display visible messages, such as the cocking of this **murai cacing's** (magpie robin) head

Message less Heeded

*Text and Photographs by
Mohamed Talhah Idrus
B. Soc. Sc. '74*

In December of 2005, some Andaman islanders took serious note of animals leaving the coastal areas as a premonition to a coming catastrophe. They followed the animals to higher grounds. Shortly after, a devastating tsunami not only ravaged the Andaman coasts but also killed hundreds of thousands of coastal dwellers in tropical Asia and Africa.

There are no pretensions in the stances of the ants or the calls of the birds. These creatures do nothing but convey truthful messages. Every act points to some aspects of The Truth, whether one prefers to see it in the religious or ecological context (which is interrelated).

Al-Qur'ān, the source of Islamic belief, mentions them explicitly and regularly (and the rest of nature) as āyāt (literally verses). Of the 114 chapters that constitute Al-Qur'ān, at least six carry specific titles of animals such as *Al-Fil* (the elephant), *Al-Ankabut* (the spider), *An-Nahl* (the Bee), *An-Naml* (the ant). Readers are challenged to observe and learn from them,

“ and Allah inspired on the bees and to build their nests in mountains, trees and buildings... ”

Most amazing must be the record of *Sulaiman* (Solomon) who heard the ants communicate! Sceptics may brush aside the literal implication of this ayat. But fictitious Dr Doolittle and Ace Ventura may differ. Real-life Jane Goodal has demonstrated her remarkable ability in mastering the chimpanzee language, Dianne Fosey 'lived' with the mountain gorillas, and a growing number has managed to 'communicate' with other great apes, dolphins, crocodiles, dugongs, and especially birds.

The Other Residents



The **pipit** (sparrows) are especially sociable creatures even when sharing food



A bee colony at the Minden campus bookstore performing 'dances' as a means to communicate and coordinate activities pertaining to the hive



The male frog often makes loud calls before mating



Perling (starlings) flock together to roost and migrate

Message Less Heeded

The air is always melodious when a male **murai cacing** invites the female to a 'duet' before mating



In the Minden campus, these residents are 'talking' too. Spiders, ants and termites are proliferating while the rhinoceros beetles are disappearing with the demise of the coconut palms.

Birds are the most 'talkative', not only through their various calls, but also via their behaviour. Some are now silent, while others are talking a different language through their unpredictable appearances, disappearances.

“And in your own nature, and in (that of) all the animals which He scatters (over the earth) there are messages for people who are endowed with inner certainty”

(Al-Qur'an. "The Kneeling". Verse 4)

Are we listening? 

Associate Professor Mohamed Talhah Idrus is currently a lecturer at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, USM. He can be reached at tolamaha@yahoo.com

The Other Residents



Beetles use body colour and shape combined with body positions to communicate specific messages with others in the group



Ants use vibrations to communicate with others in the colony



A caterpillar using acoustic signals to 'invite' ants to gather its sugary secretions



This pair of **lang kawi** (brahmny kite) seems nervous having to build their nest so close to buildings and roads in the campus



The **kedidi** (sandpiper) constantly flicks its tail while foraging for food in the Minden river

Coming Full Circle

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal
B. Sc. '07

Photographs courtesy of Zulkifli Che Hussin

It was in 1998 when Zulkifli Che Hussin had a rendezvous with destiny which started a 'love affair' that remained ever since. On that occasion he had the honour to recite a poem along with the National Literature Laureate Professor Mohamad Haji Salleh and that single opportunity was seared into his memory. Needless to say it tipped his interest towards performing arts and his 'love affair' blossomed.

"My early experiences with performing arts during school days became an asset as USM gave me the opportunity to delve into it and relish every waking moment," he told *The Leader*.

Zulkifli was called Abe (pronounced as *ah-bey* meaning 'brother' in Kelantanese dialect) Yoh by his students when he took up the post as a cultural officer after graduation. Abe Yoh grabbed the offer of doing the Bachelor of Arts programme and chose performing arts while the rest of his friends went into fine arts.

"I was alone. I knew that I can always make new friends but opportunities such as this doesn't always knock on your door and the sacrifice is worth it because the feeling of elation was intoxicating," he said.

Indeed he took to the subject like a fish to water, actively involved with the theatre and student activities. He took up the post in the executive committee member in culture at the *Desasiswa Cahaya Gemilang* (students' village) and was chosen as the stage manager most of the time. What sets Abe Yoh apart from some others in his group was his creative mind that put a sparkle, a magical touch to the show and his enthusiasm was infectious.



Abe Yoh (right) performing a **joget** during a National Day celebration

Ask his students, and they remember him for his strong Kelantanese accent and he is an iconic figure to students from Kelantan. He never ceased to amaze me with his sheer determination and passion towards the university by voluntarily participating in most of the programmes.

I recalled the time when he directed *Desasiswa Gemilang* group for the *Malam Citrawarna* cultural show. When few students registered for the *Malam Citrawarna*, he went around roping in the first year students and motivated them to participate in the annual event. The number of participants hence increased. Our performance was titled *Desaku Permai* (My Tranquil Village). We could not shake off the feeling that our 'desa' was way behind others in performing abilities. However, Abe Yoh was there reminding us that we can do it if we remained focused.

That night, just before we stepped onto the stage, Abe Yoh said to us, "Do your best to make your practice worthwhile and don't think about it as a competition; just enjoy yourself." Indeed we enjoyed portraying the daily life in a *kampung* (village) with a touch of drama and humour and we emerged champion for the performance.

Abe Yoh had been a stage manager for a singing competition, *Malam Variasiswa* (Variety Night); and also for theatrical performances *Bangsawan Bakawali* (Lotus Theatre) and *Di mana Bumi Dipijak* (Where The

Earth Was Trodden). Not only was he an accomplished stage manager, he had also acted in *Sesudah Subuh* (After Dawn).

"I have always loved theatre; I can direct and also act in it. Theatre teaches you to speak clearly, feel deeply, and respond spontaneously as you have to perform in front of the live audience," he said.

He advised that students should stay on top of things and never get so caught up in the social atmosphere of the activities and glitzy shows until they fall behind in their studies.



Participating in a **congkak** competition

"Always remember what you're there for. There is nothing worse than approaching the end of a semester and realizing you have procrastinated so much you have an impossible mountain of work. No one needs that added stress," he added.

Besides his involvement in the performing arts, he was also very active in academia and student associations. He used to put in extra hours for voluntary projects organised by USM. At the beginning of the new academic year, he helped to facilitate orientation sessions for new students.

"I am happy to be back, serving USM as a *Pegawai Kebudayaan* (Cultural Officer) because I always love this field. USM has given me an invaluable experience. Contributing knowledge back to USM is just a small way of saying 'thank you'," Abe Yoh said in his strong Kelantanese accent. **L**

On her very first day of lectures at USM, Cheang Lee Feng or 'Phen' to her friends, collapsed from gastric pains during Dr Hamima Dona Mustafa's class. That was how her course mates got to know her better. They also remembered how poor her sense of direction was since she would be barging into the wrong lecture halls.

Phen was born without the proverbial silver spoon in her mouth.

"My father was a technician who worked hard to put food on the table. My mother was a full-time homemaker who tended to the needs of the family with love and care. She helped bond us together," Phen continued.

"During my childhood days, life was rather simple as I followed the footsteps of my elder siblings. Everything seemed to change when I was offered to further my studies in mass communication at USM."

Although that was the proudest moment for the entire family because she was the first of nine siblings to reach tertiary education the pressure was on her to live up to the family's expectations.

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal
B. Sc. '07

Photographs courtesy of Cheang Lee Feng

Phen-tasy

Phen-tasy

Phen has to figure out ways to stay within the campus to help ease her family's financial burden. Where off campus lodgings would be costly, Phen managed to secure student accommodation at Desasiswa Cahaya Gemilang during her undergraduate and postgraduate days.

"In order to qualify I have to involve myself actively in the campus activities," she explained.

She was a member of the Desasiswa Gemilang Unity Executive Committee (2003/04) and participated in 2004/05 film festival, theatre performances and voluntary work for the Universiti.

She loved what she was doing because in the process she was able to explore and discover her latent abilities. It was a period of self-discovery.

Preparing to act in ***Sepi Angin ke Kota London***



In a TV drama directed by Mat London

"During the second semester of my first year I was offered to act in the television series titled *Sepi Angin ke Kota London* (Silent Breeze to London)," Phen recalled. "Later, during the semester break I was asked to play the lead in *May*, shot in Perlis (Peninsular Malaysia's northernmost state) for 15 days."

At this point, she had to put her acting on hold because her parents advised her to focus her attention on her studies. However, came the second academic year, she took up the offer to act in another television series entitled *Kepulangan Adam* (Adam's Return). During her practical training in Saspintar Bhd., a production house in Kuala Lumpur, she had the chance of acting a small role in Maxis' corporate advertisement. After office hours she worked for another production house, running errands as well as taking charge of the costumes.

Phen-tasy

“Life was hard but sacrifices were needed to move further in life. I then took another break from acting during my third year,” Phen said.

Before registering for her postgraduate studies she acted in *Tanah Ini* (This Land), another 13-episode television series shot in the state of Malacca. It was also during this time that she landed her first job as a programme editor at MUTIARAFm, a radio station in Pulau Pinang. Throughout her attachment she participated in programmes such as, *Komuniti Bestari* (Intelligent Community), and *Khazanah Mutiara* (Pearl Heritage).



On the set of the TV drama **Jangan Simpan Tangis Mu**

In 2007, she acted in a drama entitled *Jangan Simpan Tangis Mu* (Don't Hold Your Tears) in another state, Perak. To some, working part-time while studying might seem too taxing but she considers it as a crucial means to obtain experience.

“This will definitely help in my career in broadcasting after graduating from USM,” she said.

“My life has never had a dull moment. I am always waiting to grab at legitimate opportunities to facilitate my career and to fulfil my dreams,” Phen said, adding that good time management and parental support will help ease the pressure when one is working while studying.

“Since you are the one who decides on the success of your life’s objectives, you must also be the one to decide whether you are prepared to make sacrifices. Nobody can do that for you,” she advised.



Taking time with school children on a trip to Terengganu



Completing a final year film-making project



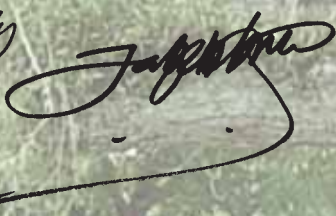
As DJ for a university event

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal is currently the Assistant Registrar at the Alumni Liaison Office (ALO), USM. She can be reached at darweena@notes.usm.my

Giving Back

A gift from your heart will certainly touch the heart of the receiver.

Let your gift begin at the Alumni Liaison Office (ALO) so that it can help support activities of our alumni members.

Sincerely


Associate Professor Mohamed Talhah Idrus
Chief Editor
The Leader

It's Us!

My Contribution

Yes, I wish to contribute of RM _____
to the Alumni Endowment Fund.

Name (Mr/Mrs/Ms): _____

Tel: (H) _____ (O) _____ (H/P) _____ Email: _____

Mailing Address : _____

Mode of Payment:

By cash/cheque/money order

No : _____

(Please make cheque payable to Bendahari
Universiti Sains Malaysia).

The receipt for this contribution can be used for tax deduction.

Kindly return the form with the payment to:

Alumni Liaison Office (ALO)
Level 5, Chancellory Building
Universiti Sains Malaysia
11800 Minden, Penang

CELLULOID TO BLOG

Syed Azidi Syed Abdul Aziz
B. Comm. '94

Photographs courtesy of
Syed Azidi Syed Abdul Aziz

*U*niversiti Sains Malaysia (USM) will always be the love of my life. I was so taken in by the ever-so-green campus after watching the movie *Ali Setan* (Satanic Ali) that was shot on location. I was in Form Three then. The feeling deepened when I was in Form Six after I attended a talk on the prospects of studying at USM and the courses offered. In 1994 I graduated from the place I called home for four years. The love never faded. It seemed to grow stronger with each yearly visit - a routine - since graduation.

Celluloid to Blog

I have never wanted to leave USM. It was Prof R. Karthigesu ("Prof Gesu" as he was known to us), the chairman of the broadcasting section at the School of Communication, who persuaded me to do so.

"I will support your application to further your study. I will do whatever it takes to have you out there in the industry..." he said.

It reminded me of a scene in *Cinema Paradiso* by Giuseppe Tornatore, where Alfredo, the blind projectionist, said to Toto, "Living here day by day, you think it's the center of the world. You believe nothing will ever change. Then you leave: a year, two years. When you come back, everything's changed. The thread's broken. What you came to find isn't there. What was yours is gone. You have to go away for a long time... many years... before you can come back and find your people. The land where you were born. But now, no. It's not possible. Right now you're blinder than I am."

Toto left the Island and later became a successful movie director.

I left USM and bagged a number of awards for my contribution in the movie industry. However, like Toto, I felt empty. Something was missing.

Toto returned many years later to carry Alfredo's coffin to mark Alfredo's last journey in this world, and there he watched the old theatre building blasted to the ground.

I was much luckier than Toto. I returned to USM as a filmmaker to attend the premier of my movie, *Persona Non Grata*, in the very same building where, as a student, I accidentally exposed my first few feet of film. Prof Gesu, who has since retired, was there as my guest alongside with my guru, Asst Prof Muhammad Hatta Mohd Tabut. I saw some other familiar faces too among the audience, most prominent of which belonged to Dr Hamima Dona Mustafa who had helped build my inner strength through her ruthless criticisms during my student years. I also recalled feeling disappointed to be ushered away by the event organisers to have my supper with the VIPs after the movie screening. I would have preferred to sit on the steps of building C10 which houses the Communication School, under the cherry tree, chatting the night away with Hatta, Gesu and Hamima.



Syed (left, second row) with coursemates at the School of Communication in the early '90s



Syed (second right) during a filming session behind the School of Communication



Syed with a foreign colleague at the 3rd Film Festival of International Cinema Student in Tokyo (1993) where he received special recognition for his **Karamnya Bahtera Merdeka**

Celluloid to Blog

Gone were those starry nights on Minden Campus that had taught me the real meaning of life, those days in the film studio annexed to building C10 which had prepared me for the world of uncertainties. Gone also were those hours-upon-hours spent at the VC (Vice-Chancellor) Rock, looking at the bridge that would later lead me to conquer my destiny.

One significant difference that USM had given to its students was freedom. The freedom I enjoyed during those student years had prepared me for the challenges in the outside world Prof Gesu wanted me to explore.



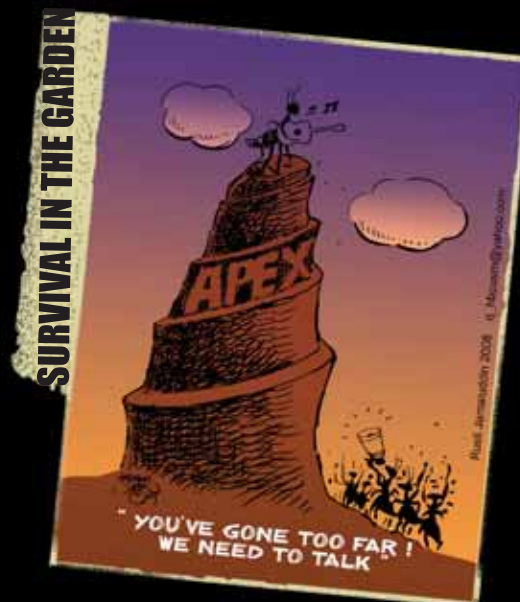
Syed (second right) reviewing a movie with some Malaysian film stars



Queuing up at his favourite nasi kandar stall in Gelugor, Pulau Pinang

Eventually, I decided to leave the industry. I have completed the circle. It's time to move on. Presently, I teach filmmaking at the Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman while planning to pursue my studies with the hope of rerouting my way back to USM. Meanwhile, I have found a new and exciting medium called the blog. With blogging you do not even have to leave home to craft your story. However, whereas moviemaking took me to film festivals, blogging has taken me to prison. L

Syed Azidi can be reached at kickdefella@yahoo.com





Stadium

Lecture Theatres (DK)

- 1 DK A, B & C
- 2 DK D, E & F
- 3 DK G - R
- 4 DK S - W
- 5 DK X
- 6 DK Y
- 7 DK Kompleks Sains
- 8 DK Z
- 9 DK SK1, SK2, SK3 & SK4



Hamzah Sendut Library

Museum and Gallery Tuanku Fauziah



Balai Islam



Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra



Chancellor Building

Trudging into the campus with an army sling bag laden with books, magazines and brochures on my first day as a student in June 2000 was a torture. I had perceived that these materials could serve as useful reference materials for my graphic communication course but the bag's weight was already killing me. Such a memory clings on as much as the tour around the campus we had during orientation week.

The beauty of the 'campus in a garden' was impressive. However, I was on a quiet lookout for cloth banners but the hand-drawn letterings on them were 'ordinary'. I had a field day collecting brochures to add to my existing collection. Only a portion of what I have collected has good aesthetic value whilst others were printed by colour offset printing.

entrepreneur by design

Muhamad Sani Mustafa
B. F. A. '03

Photographs courtesy of
Muhamad Sani Mustafa

I graduated as the second batch of graphic communication students and have been with the industry for the past six years. Looking back, I had decided to become an entrepreneur not by chance but by design. I snapped up every opportunity I can make use of a computer to pursue my dream of becoming a graphic designer and a successful entrepreneur.

My first attempt at entrepreneurship through a co-curriculum programme which taught about marketing, a touch on art and graphic theories. Armed with that knowledge, I participated and won in a logo designing competition for an institute which was holding an international symposium. The company then engaged me as a visual design consultant and supplier for book covers, banner, stationery and other miscellaneous items for the symposium. It was my first big break. Subsequently I was asked to do the same for a conference and an exhibition organised by the same institute.



Entrepreneur by Design



Minden Memories

Sani's designs adorned the innovation exhibition booth in Geneva

I joined the photography club and was assistant executive committee curator for a few of their projects. With experience I was given the opportunity to jointly hold a photography exhibition themed *Kampung Life* with five students. One of the photographs was sold and I was close to ecstatic. I was then introduced to a scientist-cum-underwater photographer who then invited me to work with him to produce a brochure and exhibition poster using his marine underwater photography collection. The brochure and poster were displayed at an innovation exhibition booth in Geneva.

Over the years I was also involved in graphic works for USM events such as *Sanggar Sanjung*, ITEX (International Invention, Innovation and Technology Exhibition) 2002 exhibition, and Post Graduate Studies Exhibition in Dubai and Vietnam. It was not easy because it was a big challenge and I have to prove my worth with the trust given to me.

As Kahlil Gibran had once said, "The teacher who is indeed wise does not bid you to enter the house of his wisdom but rather leads you to the threshold of your mind." My lecturers did just that and my friends facilitated the crossing over the threshold.

A year after graduating from the three-year Fine Arts course, I decided that it was time to move to Sungai Petani town in Kedah.

Graphic arts in communication in USM reached a new level while under the leadership of former Dean Assoc Prof Mohamed Najib Ahmad Dawa and his group of lecturers. They explored the utilization of graphics in communication and this contributed to the extensive use of graphics in promotional items, advertising, publicity, exhibition, presentation, and marketing. This ripple grew to become a wave as we can observe that computer-generated artwork has become very common. The lecturers encouraged their students to experiment new ideas to meet industry's demands.



Sani's company has facilities to print large format posters

Since I ventured into business, I am taking in USM students for industry training and, if possible, employ them. In this manner, some 20 trainees mainly from the graphics field have been employed. Besides creating job opportunities, I have also introduced the Utaragraphic Entrepreneur Programme in which four graduates are being groomed to become entrepreneurs. **■**

Muhamad Sani Mustafa can be reached at u_graphic@yahoo.com

Prof Ramli Mohamed
(Photograph by
Yong Cheek Yoon)

Navigating School

Saw Cheang Kee

USM became the first university in the country to offer the Bachelor of Communication (Honours) degree or B. Comm. programme in 1984. The Communication programme had been taught by the School of Humanities since 1970 as one of its majors within the framework of the Bachelor of Arts (Honours) degree.

"The rationale for the change to B. Comm. was driven by industry's need to identify graduates directly by the degree awarded. The curriculum retains its unique 'winning formula' in training students to critically examine the role of media in society as well as giving focus to team-building and nurturing of leadership qualities," explained Prof Ramli Mohamed with a tinge of pride.

He continued, "USM established the School of Communication in 1995. It was considered a strategic move then as such a dedicated school would value-add to the B. Comm. programme. Indeed our B. Comm. has become the degree of choice among prospective students aspiring to study Communication in public universities."

Ramli is well placed to make the statements with authority, viewed from his perspective both as a former student in Mass Communication (graduating class of '74) and an academic staff in the School of Humanities since 1976. He helmed the B. Comm. programme as Deputy Dean (Communication) in 1985 and subsequently assumed the position of founding Dean (1995-2000) when the School of Communication was established.

There was a touch of nostalgia when Ramli recounted some of the developments during the earlier years, "In the 1970s, Mass Communication was considered a 'new' major in the country's university sector and teaching staff comprised largely of expatriates. The programme was also fortunate to have received

Navigating a School

UNESCO support for the development of the Educational Technology Unit (precursor to the Centre for Instructional Technology and Multimedia) which enhanced capacity-building in broadcasting, in particular film and television studies."

Teaching support for the B. Comm. programme is provided by 25 full-time academic staff (now mostly Malaysian) and admission has remained competitive; about 180 students were accepted in 2008. The degree offers pathways in Broadcasting and Film, Journalism, and Persuasive Communication. Besides B. Comm., the school has been successful in attracting local and foreign candidates to pursue higher degree studies which dovetail with the University's aim to accelerate research.

On the issue of graduate employment, Ramli remarked, "Employers recognise the USM curriculum has been able to consistently produce the critical human resource required by the local Communication industry. Not surprisingly, our students have demonstrated a successful track record when undertaking quality productions in their project work with industry."

"As an example, the Adwave Programme has helped propel final year students in Persuasive Communication to sharpen their skills through advertising competitions, forums, exhibitions and source for sponsorship from private sector organisations. Many have



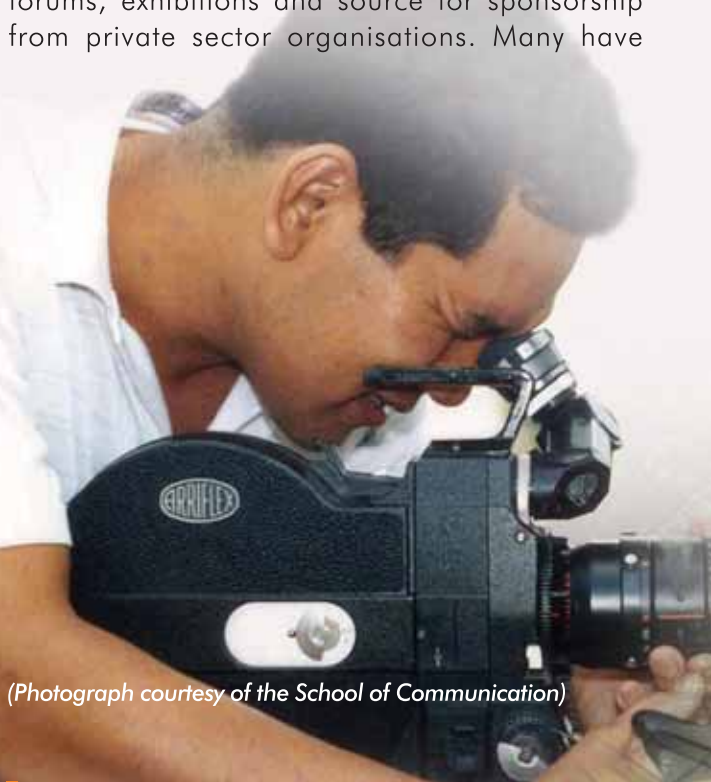
Communication undergraduates working on a university bulletin (Photograph courtesy of the School of Communication)

made an impact in the media landscape whilst others have risen to become important personalities in the Malaysian corporate sector," added Ramli.

Some names that came to mind include Tan Sri Mohamed Hashim Ahmad Makaruddin (executive chairman of a news publishing house), Keith Liu (anchorperson of a consumer news television company) and Rajan Moses (managing director of a public relations firm).

The Communication programme celebrated its 35th anniversary in 2006, having started its eventful journey in the School of Humanities. Today, the School of Communication continues to grow and evolve with the changing needs of industry, not just in terms of curriculum development but also in ensuring it has the necessary wherewithal concerning equipment and infrastructure. Film and Television courses, for example, require expensive outlays such as cameras used by industry and digital video-editing facilities. Managing cost is thus a challenge, the other being the importance of retaining experienced academic staff for teaching and promoting the USM culture and appetite for vigorous research.

The School may have undergone periodic renewal over the years but remains steadfast in its singular aim of having only the best of standards *inter alia* giving its students the cutting edge know-how to compete in the global environment. **L**



(Photograph courtesy of the School of Communication)

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rebels of the press

Artwork by Rusli Jamaludin

Yong Check Yoon



On 4 August 1827, the demise of the four-page *Prince of Wales' Island Gazette* (PWIG) - the first English language newspaper in the country - was announced. According to the paper, published by William Cox at Beach Street in Pulau Pinang, the possible reason given for the suppression was related to an article on the Siamese Treaty published "some three months ago".

(Photograph from 'Historical Personalities of Penang')

Then, in 1828 the *Oriental Herald* and the *Journal of General Literature* published the comments of the Singapore Chronicle, stating plainly: "The thing, however, is too improbable to be believed; for, putting the tone and tenor of the paper out of the question, wherever a Censorship exists, (as it does at Penang,) the responsibility of the Editor ceases, and the Government, if any thing unpleasing is published, must look to their own officer; besides, if the paper had come to an untimely end, by the act of Government, what should have prevented the Proprietor from plainly saying so?"

In fact, the colonial government had withdrawn support for the paper as a result of the article. This could have been the first recorded case of the 'suppression' of the media in the country. However, it was eventually demonstrated that the 'suppression' did not succeed in preventing editors from being highly critical of the government of the day, despite the presence of a "Gagging Act" in 1823. It was, however, discontinued in 1833, two years before the Act was formally repealed in India.



The *Penang Register and Miscellany* on 22 August 1827 filled the void left by the PWIG and it, too, had to accept the restrictions of the Act. However, it soon headed the same way as the PWIG when the editor inserted a separate slip of paper printed with censored paragraphs into the newspaper. His bold action evoked "frowns and threatened penalties of authority". The *Register* only survived

Rebels of the Press

for a year and was replaced by the *Government Gazette, Prince of Wales' Island, Singapore and Malacca*, which came under the immediate patronage of the government. This *Government Gazette* lasted for only 20 months when "the government, which had brought it into life, was abolished" in October 1828.

In 1833, the *PWIG* was revived. Ironically, four years later, the *Singapore Chronicle* which carried an editorial on the demise of *PWIG* in 1828, ceased publication and its type and press were shipped by F. Carnegy to Pulau Pinang, the purpose of which was to set up an additional plant to print the *Pinang Gazette and Straits Chronicle*.

It is believed that this was when the *PWIG* and the *Pinang Gazette* merged. In 1855, James Richardson Logan bought over and helmed the newspaper as an editor-cum-manager until his death in 1869. Perhaps Logan's takeover coincided with the liberalisation of the Calcutta government which instructed local governments to permit editors to examine selected official papers.

Logan was known as a fearless lawyer and a prolific intellectual who, besides being the editor of the *Pinang Gazette*, was the founder of the 27-volume *Journal of the Indian Archipelago and Eastern Asia* (often known as Logan's Journal). According to historian C.M. Turnbull, Logan worked closely together with his elder brother Abraham Logan, editor of the *Singapore Free Press*, to "influence and direct public opinion through their newspapers" when the demand for constitutional reforms reach its peak from 1850s to the early 1860s. This resulted in the transfer of control to the colonial office from the Indian office in 1867, with Transfer Road being named after this monumental achievement.

The process of liberating the press from the suffocating control of the authorities gave rise to interesting stories that can be gleaned from sources such as the *Twentieth Century Impressions of the British Malaya*. The book provided some rather insightful happenings of the people in media in those days. Mention was made of a "Pinang editor" who was imprisoned for criminal libel. There was also a *Straits Times* editor, Arnot Reid who, through his scathing article, raised the ire of the "younger bloods" who were determined to whip Reid if they ever managed to catch him. As a result, Reid had to enlist the help of a bodyguard. At his desk, he also kept a revolver, which would later become an icon of him.

Reflecting on the evolution of the early papers of Pulau Pinang and their liberalisation would inevitably trigger memories of those who had experienced the liberal side of USM in its formative years. USM once had a speakers' corner for the students, and that helped forge tolerance towards differences in opinion. The French philosopher François-Marie Arouet, better known by his pen-name 'Voltaire', is claimed to have said, "I do not agree with what you have to say, but I'll defend to death your right to say it." It still rings true!

Sweet liberty brought together students from different ethnic groups but with the same cause to effect a change in society. Hence, it comes as no surprise that many of them developed into leaders with good oratory skills and were committed to social causes. They did what they did by listening to their hearts, just as what the early rebels of the press had done. ▀

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The literary staff (who would be known as 'editorial staff' today) of the *Pinang Gazette* (Photograph from 'Twentieth Century Impressions of British Malaya')

Chalking Up a Difference

Yong Cheek Yoon

There are 21 public universities - not including three dozen-odd private ones - and USM is expected to stand out exceptionally well in the midst, including those internationally renowned institutes of high learning. Admittedly it is going to be tough, but it is only the tough that gets going.

In order to achieve that, Vice-Chancellor Professor Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak explained during his talk *Universiti APEX: Satu Tuntutan, Satu Pengorbanan* (APEX University: One Demand, One Sacrifice) on 2 February that transformation is required. It essentially requires drastic changes and that include a change in mindset.

He pointed out that USM has to work strategically towards the objectives of the Accelerated Programme for Excellence (APEX). He added that in order to transform, it has to think-out-of-the-box to achieve what it has laid out: Transforming Higher Education for a Sustainable Tomorrow.

In outlining the APEX roadmap, Dzulkifli added that in 40 years of USM's history, it has been undergoing a continual transformation that was marked by several major milestones such as the launching of 'University in a Garden' in 2001 which advocates sustainable development. It also pioneered the *Kampus Sejahtera* (Healthy Campus) Programme, the transdisciplinary (cluster) approach and the USM-Community partnership programmes. Its projects are geared towards benefitting the community, and if possible with their involvement.

USM was granted the Research University status in 2007 and received the APEX University status the following year. In a recent move, USM introduced *sains@usm*. The word 'sains' is the acronym for Science and Arts Innovation Space and at its 12.4-hectare site in Bukit Jambul, about three kilometres from the main campus, provides research facilities for science and arts. *sains@usm* represents an innovative space that promotes highly integrated research facilities with a range of transdisciplinary expertises.

Citing another example, he said that USM's Healthy Campus Programme was awarded by the Alliance for Healthy Cities at the 3rd Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities in Ichikawa on 25 October 2008. What first started on a campus level has been acknowledged internationally because of the sustainability of the value-added programme. It is also because of the sustainable development of the campus through the 'University in a Garden' programme that the Brahminy Kite (*Haliastur Indus*) has returned to USM to roost and it means that the campus has suitable tall trees and a clean environment for it to nest.



He also cautioned that USM needs to remain focused and navigate to its objectives unperturbed by comments about how it should be done.

There is a need to think about education for sustainable development and one way to go about it is to have the 'business unusual' approach. Team work is an integral part of success and is complementary to other components that include the ability to think out-of-the-box and eliminate bureaucratic redtape.

Dzulkifli said that education has to be tailored to contemporary needs, quoting a leading educationist and economist Ricardo Diez-Hochleitner who pointed out in 1996: "Education is still living in the past because its present social context is totally different from the situation for which it was designed. Education must not only be adapted to the needs of our age, it must also make a real effort to look ahead some twenty-five years,"

He added that Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is one such example. It was established in 1861 "to be a new and different kind of institution to serve

the purposes of the emerging Industrial Age in the United States".

Under the APEX roadmap, bureaucracy in governance, talent mismatch and gaps in resources are expected to be reduced and/or eliminated. On the other hand, global agenda, autonomy and accountability shall be increased.

"USM needs to project itself beyond local and regional demands to stay competitive," Dzulkifli said. "It has to look at its future relevance and create people-led, sustainability-led local solutions where these are not available."

However, before any transformation can take place, there must be preparedness for change. One indication is the evidence of cohesiveness around the strategic intent. The next level is whether the plan has been well-communicated, bought-in and internalised.

"We have to consider the cohesiveness of the leadership team and evaluate the risks of changes in leadership," he said.

Dzulkifli pointed out that success is often gauged by Key Performance Indicator (KPI) but ignoring whatever is intangible. Hence, he proposed that Key Intangible Performance (KIP) should be taken into consideration as well. KIP involves the human factor-sincerity, humility, and sacrifice - qualities that are intangible but essential. As Albert Einstein had said: "Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts." Hence, every single employee counts, as success does not come from the effort of a one-man show.

Dzulkifli said, quoting Prof W. Chan Kim who wrote the book *Blue Ocean Strategy*, "... never try to imitate anybody, because as long as you benchmark with somebody, at the best you will be like them. Meanwhile, the person you benchmark is ahead of you. You will never close the gap." Assuredly, USM plans to strategise its plans and make critical headway in areas where it has the capacity to excel!

Photographs by Fairus Md Isa



Sirih Pulang ke Gagang

There was much joy as 700 alumni and guests renewed acquaintance and exchanged well wishes with each other at the biennial dinner gathering *Sirih Pulang ke Gagang* held at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre on 20 December 2008. The Chancellor, DYMM Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail and his consort graced the function which was organised by the USM Alumni Association Federal Territory and Selangor Chapter. The programme of entertainment included a cultural dance performance, singing and comedy sketches.



The chosen theme for this event was *Kenangan* (or Down Memory Lane) and two distinguished alumni were "remembered" for their contributions to society. Datuk Seri Idris Jala (B. Soc. Sc. '82) and Haji Romli Abu Bakar (B. Soc. Sc. '75) were aptly honoured with the *Tokoh Alumni 2008* Award from the Chancellor.

Photographs by Yong Check Yoon

Gotong-royong @ Anjung Budi

About 70 staff and alumni attended a *gotong-royong* (voluntary services) on 23 January and donated plants to help beautify the landscape of the Alumni Club House named Anjung Budi. The event was organised by the Alumni Liaison Office (ALO) and a Kemboja tree was planted by the Vice-Chancellor and ALO Director. The official opening of Anjung Budi (formerly the security office) is scheduled to coincide with this year's March Convocation.



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon



Merbok Festival

Kampung Sungai Batu turned carnival site on 10 January 2009 when Hj Romli Abu Bakar (Soc. Sc. '75) and the kampong folks held a festival to attract the attention of organisations and concerned individuals to the plight of the kampong. A number of USM's schools and centres showed off their wares. A German organisation pledged free health services to the kampong, while USM donated RM 3000 to a student who will be pursuing his studies overseas. The day-long festival was highlighted by watersports.

Photographs by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

Yusril's Talk

Prof Yusril Ihza Mahendra delivered a two-hour talk entitled *The Link Between Two Races and Two Countries: The Realities of the Present and the Challenges of the Future*, on 18 December 2008. It was chaired by USM Publications director Profesor Dato' Dr. Md Salleh Yaapar, held at Dewan Persidangan Universiti. The talk, hosted by the Alumni Liaison Office, was attended by about 100 staff members, students and representatives of the Indonesian Consulate-General in Penang.

Photograph by Yong Check Yoon



Photograph by Yusuf Suid

Public Speaking Seminar

First Distinguished Toastmaster (DTM) Gerald Green, a public speaking consultant, was invited to deliver a seminar at the School of Biological Sciences on 12-13 February and another at the School of Humanities on 16-17 February. Both events were organised by the Alumni Liaison Office for final year students from both schools. The first seminar was attended by 22 students whilst the second event had 23 participants.

Alumni AGM

The 13th annual general meeting of the Alumni Association was held on 21 February to a packed audience. It was a memorable occasion for members as it represented the first time *Anjung Budi* (alumni club house) was used to host a formal function. Shaifubahrim Mohd Salleh was voted in as the association's president and will serve with the new executive committee for the 2009-2011 biennial term. The full exco list can be accessed at <http://alo.usm.my>.



Photograph by Yong Check Yoon



Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus



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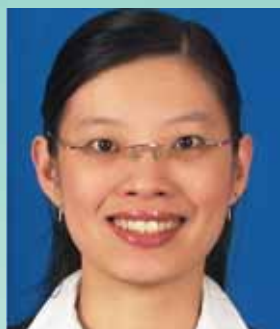
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make a date with us!

BAZMAAQS
Celebrate with a heart

23-25 October 2009
Minden Campus, Pulau Pinang