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THE LEADER

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COMMANDING PRESENCE



Anthropologists Judy (originally from Canada) and Suichi Nagata (originally from Japan) reenacting a Malay bersanding in Pulau Pinang in 1972. The couple was coaxed to don headgear and sampin which form part of the Malay wedding attire (Photograph courtesy of Judy Nagata)



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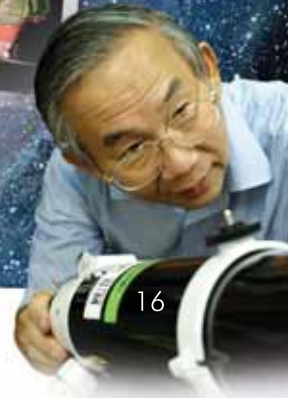
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Cover artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin. The crest of USM, with its emphatic **Kami Memimpin** (We Lead) motto, has portrayed the university's identity, character and strength around the globe.

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FROM THE CHIEF EDITOR

Present day Minden campus was given by the Sultan of Kedah to a Sumatran sailor for helping the Sultan in his battle against the Siamese. About 250 years later, the British occupied it as barracks for their legions and regiments of Australian and Gurkha soldiers. They renamed Bukit Jenaton as Minden, and the local ad-libbed the name to the present.

When the soldiers left, British legacy remained; beautiful bungalows dot the hills and exotic trees from South America and India line the narrow streets. They were the earliest features that contribute to the present USM identity.

The pioneering students were almost all locals but their lecturers came from the United States, Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, France, Great Britain, India, Thailand, the Philippines, Japan, Bangladesh and other countries.

They too left their marks. The iconic Transformation sculpture remains a landmark 30 years after Peter Gelencser, a Hungarian Australian, sailed home in a catamaran made in USM. Hideaki Hoshina's Red Square, although modified, is still intact near the Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra while the rest of foreign lecturers left indelible marks in student attitude and styles.

Forty years on, USM is still a cultural and intellectual melting pot. There is a large population of foreign students who have chosen USM to pursue knowledge while international academics continue to come to the campus to share their experiences.

In this issue *The Leader* tries to highlight this changing trend of connecting cultures in an academic setting. We hope that this will encourage more alumni to contribute articles of the same nature for future publications.



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Mohamed Talhah Idrus
B. Soc. Sc. '74



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COMMANDING PRESENCE

Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
B. Pharmacy '76

Internationalisation is now one of the ‘buzz’ words in higher education. As the world shrinks due to the advances in technology, many institutions of higher learning are able to be within reach of one another, not only physically but more so virtually. This has, by and large, changed the landscape of higher education such that collaboration has become an important aspect of learning and sharing, away from the traditional frontiers.

USM is at the forefront of the process of internationalisation taking into perspective its mission to be a relevant global university with high visibility to the international community. At the early stages of its development, USM has had a fair share of international and foreign academic staff amongst its community in providing support to the many courses conducted in English. Though this profile varies from time to time, some names such as D.J. Blake, S. Wolfe, S. Nagata, S. Gardner, R.T. Shen, R. Spytek, P. F. Gibbs, D. S. Gibbons, R. Baker, L. Sargeant, V. Niel, H. Hoshina, O. L. Mapua, Gore and A. Hunter are always part of the living memories of the university. These lecturers came from countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, India, the Philippines, Thailand, and Japan. Some even managed to marry their students, let alone from among the staff. Perhaps such incidences are indicative of how successful the internationalisation process has been.

However, as more and more of the local talents are recruited and trained to serve the university, the expatriates were gradually replaced; this, however,

excludes the newer schools and programmes. The situation became more pronounced as Bahasa Malaysia was introduced as the medium of instruction beginning in the mid-70s.



Local lecturers among foreign ones from the the Philippines, Thailand, Great Britain, India and Bangladesh in a HBP seminar (Photograph courtesy of the School of HBP)

Indeed, USM has always been international by virtue of the fact that the staff returnees are from a diversity of universities from all over the world, many are from the well-known institutes of higher learning. In other words, there is nothing much amiss except for the physical presence of a community of international staff and some of their peculiarities that invariably left a different kind of impact on the campus life. For example, their generally liberal and outlandish perspective and behaviour did cause some raised eyebrows among the more conservative ones. But because universities then are rather autonomous and flexible, it was never an issue of concern. The then vice-chancellor had a freer hand to manage what would otherwise have been blown out of proportion by today’s standards.

Tugu Transformasi by Peter Gelencser, a Hungarian Australian (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



*David Ekroth (left), a foreign lecturer conducting architecture class in the School of HBP
(Photograph courtesy of the School of HBP)*



He was not afraid to act when he had to. A case in point: a near 'rebellion' that took place at the School of Housing, Building and Planning (HBP) provoked by a major disagreement between a couple of expatriate staff and senior students. The Vice-Chancellor was quick to set up an independent committee of enquiry consisting the then Pro-Chancellor Raja Azlan Shah (now the Sultan of Perak) as the Chair; with the President of the Academic Staff Association, Dr (now Tan Sri) Kamal Salih, and myself being the Chairperson of the Students' Union Council as committee members. The committee was mandated to thoroughly investigate and recommend to the Vice-Chancellor the course of actions to be taken to resolve the issue speedily. It involved the termination of contracts and a strong warning of those concerned. This was perhaps about the only incident that required such drastic intervention. Moreover, post-1974, a new Act was introduced whereby disciplinary actions were tightly regulated in cases of even the slightest mischievous behaviour. Life becomes more sober after that, and certainly duller.

Then, the number of foreign students were very limited, be it at the undergraduate or the post-graduate levels. The other foreigners are of course the WAGs (Wives and Girlfriends) of the more adventurous staff who at that time mingled quite freely with the campus community.

Fast forward, internationalisation is now part and parcel of USM vision of the future to move beyond the shores of Malaysia. Among other things, the university's international office, USM International, has been given a new image and structure and serve as a one-stop centre for the processes of internationalisation. The university frequently participated in many recruitment exercises abroad. In meeting international requirements, there is now a dedicated international house and *desa* (students residence) with upgraded facilities to support various international in-campus activities and social gathering.



*The International House was built to accommodate the influx of foreign students
(Photograph by Alec Chin)*



The Middle Eastern students' community is sufficiently large, making it viable to support its own enterprises (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)




Despite the lack of bike lanes, cycling is popular practice among foreign students (Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)

Subsequent to recent developments, the international situation has taken a different turn. While the number of foreign staff remain low, the number of foreign students increases steadily from less than 500 (including undergraduates) in the late 1990s to more than 3000, mostly post-graduate and post-doctoral candidates in a span of about five years, and counting. The foreign undergraduate numbers remained capped at about five percent of the total students' population. The nationalities that they belonged also jumped from less than 10 to more than 60 countries by now. The numbers of foreign post-graduate students are projected to go up further up to about 30 percent of the total post-graduates numbers; by 2012 the total number is estimated to be about 15,000.

In other words, USM is gradually transformed into a predominantly post-graduate research-intensive university under the APEX initiative, with a maximum of 20,000 post-graduate student enrolments in the near future. As a result, just by sheer logic, undergraduate student intakes will considerably be reduced. It goes without saying that the number of international and foreign staff must be once reconfigured again so that USM will benefit optimally from such

expertise, especially in emerging and new areas that are of interest to the future of the university and Malaysia.

Already there is a cohort of a new international community developing in the campus, and this consist of students from the international school associated with the university located a stone's throw away at *sains@usm*. The school is a new facility to attract even more international population to USM and it is already making its presence felt. The University is planning to start its first foreign campus in not a too distant future, plus a global campus locally. This will certainly be the next phase in putting USM on the international map.

All these means USM is taking a serious attempt at internationalisation as an important and integral part of enhancing its learning environment. This is in order to create an active future cosmopolitan-like sustainable ambient that enriches the overall academic culture vibrancy and sustainability of the campus. Internationalisation in this case must not be seen as a mere number game for statistical glory and targets without paying equal attention to the intangible values. Often these intangible values harness in an excellent and a superior intellectual environment too. They are particularly helpful in strengthening the trust and understanding between different high cultures. That would contribute significantly in ensuring a sustainable tomorrow with knowledge and wisdom as the foundation. 

Professor Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak can be reached at vc@notes.usm.my

Why BORDER?

Roshada Hashim

Universities around the world are now under immense pressure to provide a trained workforce that can keep pace with the unprecedented development of globalisation. In this respect, postgraduate education is increasingly regarded as the driver of knowledge economy in institutions of higher learning and to produce highly skilled graduates and professionals who are able to address a wide range of issues within a global context. In future, it is envisaged that the significance of a university and its impact on society will be judged on its ability to be relevant in an international arena. Consequently, the development of an internationalisation agenda that addresses issues such as curriculum, partnership with other universities overseas, research collaboration as well as its staff and student profiles are inevitable.

Internationalising USM is not a new phenomenon; indeed the University's commitment to internationalisation began since its inception 40 years ago but with different emphasis and intensity whereby research collaborations and establishing links with universities worldwide were the main thrusts. Having worked in an international context and positioned itself as a research university globally, USM accelerated the pace of its internationalisation agenda 10 years ago. As such it has painstakingly built an international reputation as a provider of postgraduate education within a strong research culture, high quality teaching and conducive learning environment in order to respond to these global challenges.

With internationalisation comes, among others, internationalising and diversifying the University's academic and student community so that different international perspectives, knowledge, culture and ideas can be introduced into the campus life and enrich the learning process. The richness in the campus community creates a positive environment where both domestic and international USM graduates stand to gain from a learning environment that facilitates interaction within a multicultural and multilingual setting.

Why Border?

USM has targeted so that at least 25% of its entire student population would comprise of international students. However, this landscape is expected to change further after USM was selected for the APEX University programme by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education in 2008 and the international student intake is extended to a wider spectrum of undergraduate programmes. In the late nineties, the international student community in USM was only 84 but this has since grown to 1764 by July 2009 as has the diversity in the country of origin. Currently the international postgraduate student community comes from at least 40 nations. In the early nineties, the majority of the international student population originated from South East Asia, but over the years, the trend has shifted towards West Asia and North Africa.

In addition, as USM moves towards enhancing the global competence of its postgraduates, student mobility is crucial component of this internationalisation agenda. Funding is available for international activities such as attachments with senior researchers worldwide to add value to their research and increase students' exposure to the latest development in their research, as well as international exchanges and internships. Further, postgraduate students are also funded to present and defend their research findings at international conferences so that contacts and networking with their research counterparts can be established. Student support in the form of merit based fellowships are also available to research postgraduate students to assist them during their stay in USM. Students are also trained to be independent, creative and innovative by allowing them to write and defend research proposals in addition to managing small research grants. To prepare and equip students to face global challenges, USM postgraduate students provided training in a range of soft skills as well as build their entrepreneurial acumen via professional and personal development workshops.

To address the increase in international postgraduate numbers, support and services for international students have improved over the years. In addition to a wide range of services provided by the USM International Office, students also have access to improved housing facilities such as the International House and more university units for small families. Activities for all students are organised on a regular basis to help foster a positive and more cohesive multicultural postgraduate community. A recent development is the introduction of the Postgraduate Student Ambassador programme in which domestic and international postgraduate students are specially selected to assist the University in some of its promotion activities, provide personalised insights of student life in USM to prospective students, give guided tours as well as helping new students adjust to campus life.



These initiatives are expected to produce an alumni who are well rounded and competent with a globalised outlook. As USM produces more internationalised graduates who are suitable for leadership positions, a loyal alumni will be an asset, assisting USM build more international partnerships and open our doors wider to the world. ■

Roshada Hashim can be reached at roshada@usm.my

"Malaysian students are shy. It is difficult to make friends with them."

This observation was prevalent among a number of international students when they arrived at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM).

The WORLD *at* HOME

*Norpisah Mat Isa
B. Sc. '84*

The World at Home

To combat the perception, the International Office has designed specific programmes which aim at nurturing multi-cultural competence so as to facilitate friendship, both among fellow-Malaysians of various ethnicities as well as between Malaysians and international students.

Through the Student Buddy Programme, a group of students assist the International Office in welcoming international students and visitors as well as help them to make friends with the local students through various social activities. These responsibilities spur the students to expand and intensify their knowledge about multi-ethnic Malaysia, generally, and about Pulau Pinang and USM, specifically, in anticipation of some of the frequent questions asked.

*An Arab family watching a performance by students from China
(Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)*



*All nations come together during the International Cultural Fiesta in USM
(Photograph courtesy of International Office)*

Besides that, the Tropical Field Programme initiated in 2004 by the dean of the School of Biological Sciences, the late Prof Ahyaudin Ali and a Canadian, the late Yousuf Ebrahim, from the University of Victoria (UV), Canada, offers opportunities for international students to team up with their local counterparts, to spend three days with families from the village communities in Pulau Pinang and Kedah. Among those who have participated were 50 Canadians, 4 Singaporeans and 10 Malaysians. Presently, two courses from the programme, Tropical Biodiversity and Tropical Field Ecology, involving six weeks of lectures, field work and site visits have been recognised by UV and the total of three credits earned go toward the students' graduation requirements.





Multiculturalism thrives on campus (Photograph courtesy of International Office)

In 1993, USM became one of the pioneer members of the Commonwealth Universities Study Abroad Consortium (CUSAC), an organisation that promotes exchange of students among the Commonwealth universities. The following year, two students were enrolled to follow one semester of studies, at the University of British Columbia, Canada and another two at the University of Minnesota, United States of America. They returned with sharpened multi-cultural competence, increased communication skills, heightened confidence and were more prepared to function in a multi-cultural environment, such as in multi-national companies.

USM also provides interactions through cyber space. The Yokohama National University (YNU) has presented USM with a Multimedia Education Room at the International Office where students can follow courses from YNU. The students themselves have developed various Facebook groups to communicate with their international counterparts.

Another international activity is the 'country focus week' made possible through collaborative efforts with foreign embassies, the various schools and departments at USM, such as the School of Languages, Literacies and Translations (SOLLAT), the Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPS), the Islamic Center and the Division of Student Affairs and Development (BHEPP). For the past six years, beginning with the Japanese Language and Culture week in 2003, various countries, including France, Cuba, Poland and Germany have been highlighted.

Some of the programmes have produced encouraging results. For instance, the Student Buddy programme has succeeded in seeing some non-Muslim students fast during the month of Ramadhan in order to empathise with their Muslim friends during that period.

Perhaps, with continuous concerted efforts at cross-cultural exchanges, stereotypes such as Malaysian students are shy can be corrected. 🇲🇾

Norpisah Mat Isa can be reached at norpisah@notes.usm.my

What say we...

The contents of the magazine are very impressive and presented in a very attractive way. The information shared is very useful and gives us the feeling that we are still enjoying campus life. Hats off to the whole editorial board for producing such an informative magazine.

V. Lokesh Anand
B. E. '07

The Leader is a good magazine for keeping the pioneer groups in touch but has no direct relevance to me since most of the stories were about past years. I hope you can balance it up with stories of the recent alumni as well.

MohdIbzaiki Che Sof@Ibrahim
B. Soc. Sc. '06

Chief Editor replies...

We appreciate every feedback from readers. The points raised are recurring problems that we have been trying hard to address. We hope the younger alumni will be forthcoming with fresh stories.

The magazine continues to progress. I would like to suggest that contact details of alumni (featured in 'Keeping track') be provided, including their degree and year of graduation. It could facilitate communication. For example, many alumni would be able to promote *Balikampus* among those who do not know of this programme.

Abdul Talib Saad
B. Sc. (HBP) '84

The Leader makes interesting reading and I value this magazine. Congratulations for the excellent piece of work.

Wan Azarul Effendi Wan Hanafi
B. Pharm '99

I think *The Leader* can improve its layout to avoid being a bit cramped up. The articles are fun to read but alumni from branch campuses might feel left out since there was not much coverage of their campuses.

Julieyana Md Rozi
B. App. Sc. '07

The French Connection

James H French

Talhah,

Great to hear from you! Did you receive a story I wrote about Sofian's and my trip to Kedah for Hari Raya? Sofian's story is much more interesting than mine. Hmm, I guess I was the first international student at USM . . . it was a great introduction to my career with UNDP and then the Winrock Foundation where I worked in agriculture and forestry extension for almost 20 years. I was assigned mostly to Indonesia, Thailand, Nepal, and Bhutan. After my son fell ill in 1996, I returned to the US and got a job designing training for the US Postal Service and just now started a new assignment 'greening' the mail.

Do you know where Tan Bin Sin is? I had forgotten about going swimming in Genting . . . I also travelled with him to his folk's place in Kelantan. Good times. Unfortunately, I have been a poor correspondent and spent most of my time in Indonesia and Thailand with few trips to Malaysia.

I'd have to look around to find any interesting stories. I haven't been able to find any pictures of the USM era which is a shame.



*Jim (left) at home in the US, with wife, Tack, his son Jay and dog Baloo
(Photograph courtesy of Jim French)*

1. How did you come to know of USM

My undergraduate degree at the University of Hawaii was in Southeast Asian Studies under Dr Walter Vella. I participated in a three month study abroad program in Singapore and Indonesia which got me interested in taking off the whole year to study history, anthropology, and sociology from a Southeast Asian perspective. Also it was cheaper than living in Hawaii and I wanted to see the world! Dr Vella suggested visiting USM and he worked out an arrangement with University of Hawaii to allow me to transfer 4 classes toward my degree in Hawaii. I remember it was rather complicated at the USM end but they finally agreed to allow me to stay for a semester as a 'non-graduating student'. I lived off-campus in Bukit Glugor with a

nice Malay family who had a food cart and four children who gave me ample opportunity to practice my Malay. You probably remember the *Nasi Tomato* vendor in front of the Teacher's College . . . 'Abang' was the father of my host family.

2. Reason(s) for your choice

Learn from Southeast Asian scholars. I was lucky to have Chandra Pillai as one of my professors as well as others who were established local academics. Of course Penang was also a pleasant place to be and the freedom of roaming the island by motorcycle was an adventure. Penang was also close to the Thai border. I spent a year as a volunteer English teacher in a Thai village as an 18-year old and I wanted to stay in touch with

my Thai roots there. It is really all about people and relationships and getting over the divisiveness that was so prominent during the time of the Vietnam war.

Sofian Ahmad
(Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)



3. Memorable experience(s)

I was just another student. I was lucky in USM because I didn't have to go through all the rigorous competition to get in that you guys did. I was a 'Mat Saleh' in a minority of one. I guess I rounded out our race relations class in sociology but I really knew very little about the British past and was probably not a very good representative of the West. The people I hung out with most were Tan Bin Sin, Sofian Ahmed, and Hamima Dona who helped make me feel at home. Of course, I fondly remember the green grounds of the USM campus and some lonely moments that I spent on 'The Rock'.



Tan Bin Sin
(Photograph by Yusuf Suid)

4. Do you still keep in touch with USM

I have not kept in touch with USM though I would love to revisit with my family. My wife is from Thailand and both my son was born in Bangkok. We have a house not far from the Chaoprya River called "RaakKaew" or Tap Root. When we have time for a trip to Asia, that is where we gravitate.

5. Anything else.

I feel very lucky to have had an opportunity to live with and learn from my Malaysian friends at USM. It does make me feel more like a global citizen and I wish more American students had a chance to get to know their peers on their 'home ground'. I did not have what it takes to become a diplomat or even a scholar of Southeast Asian studies. I have, however, been a keen observer of change and value my experience in USM.

Finally, I am attaching a short brief of what I have been up to for the past 30+ years in case that is of any use. Also this is another shot of my wife Tack who continues to be the one passion in my life after 28 years. The other shot includes my son Jay and dog Baloo. 📷

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Professor Emeritus Dato' Shahnnon Ahmad, National Laureate and former Dean of the School of Humanities, is perhaps one of Malaysia's well-known writers and embodies the very concept of internationalisation. His writings are not only widely read in their original Malay but have also been translated into many different languages, thus ensuring the longevity of many of his thought-provoking works.

Harvesting Tributes

Haslina Haroon



Rentong (1965) was translated into English by Harry Aveling in 1974, and was given the title *Rope of Ash*. Aveling also translated another one of Shahnnon's works, *Srengenge* (1973), which was published in 1979 with the same title. Other works which have also been translated include *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* (1966), translated into *No Harvest but a Thorn*, and *Tunggul-tunggul Gerigis* (1988), translated into *Stumps*. Both translations were carried out by the writer Adibah Amin.

Harry Aveling, a former lecturer in the School of Humanities, translated *Srengenge*, *Rentong* and critics of Shahnnon's thinking
(Photograph courtesy of Haslina Haroon)



Shahnnon Ahmad
(Photograph courtesy of Penerbit USM)



Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan, in particular, has enjoyed a wide readership due to the fact that it has been translated into not only English but also different other languages. The novel was translated into Danish by Vagn Plenge in 1980 with the title *Kun en torn* (Only a Thorn), into Japanese by Jun Onozawa in 1981 with the title *Ibara no michi*, by Marianne Gerland-Ekeroth into Swedish in 1982 with the title *Bara en tagg* (Only one Thorn), and into French by Nicole Biros in 1987 with the title *Le Riz* (The Rice).

Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan, in particular, has enjoyed a wide readership due to the fact that it has been translated into not only English but also different other languages.

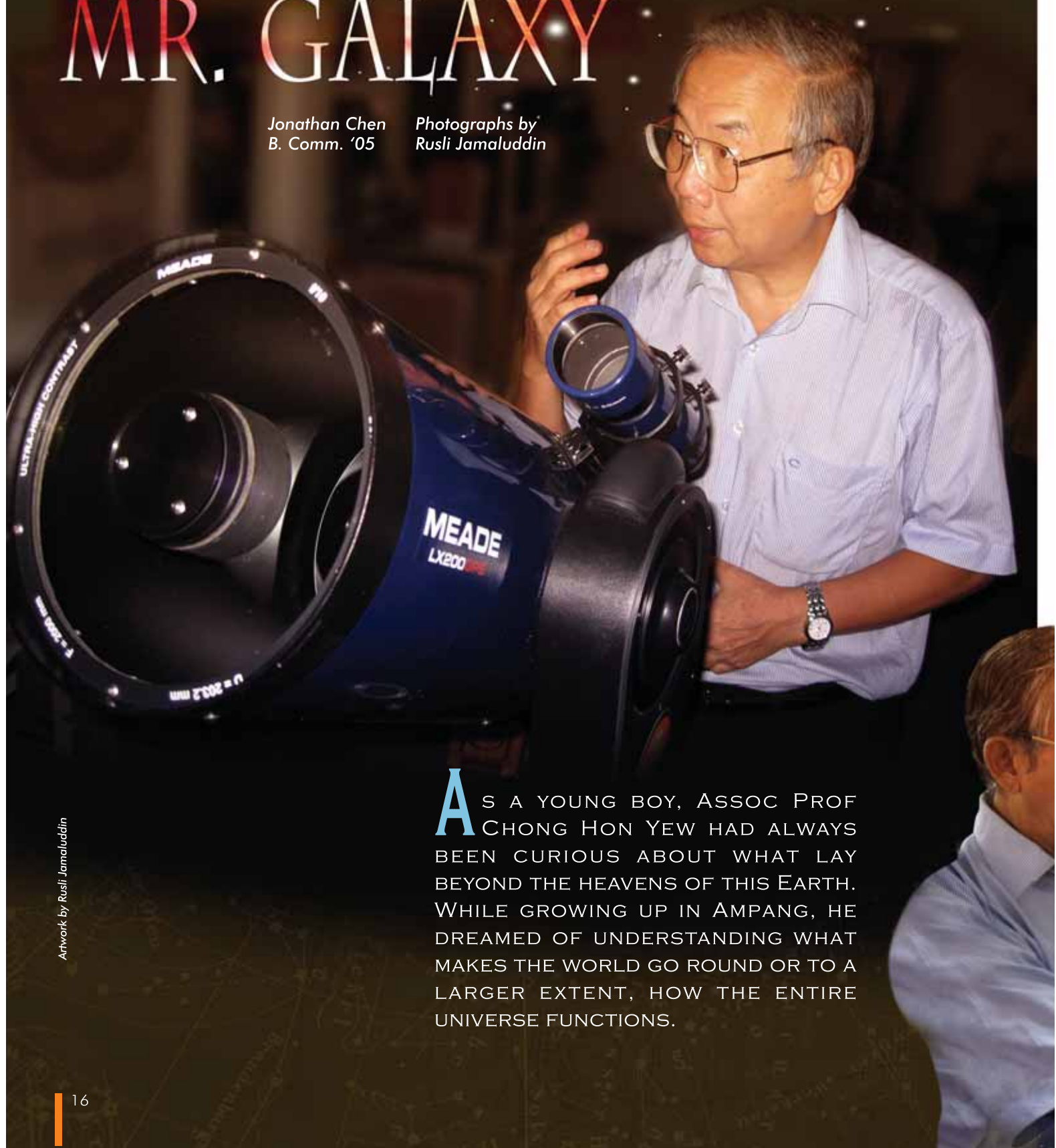
What is interesting about Shahnon's *Ranjau Sepanjang Jalan* is that became the basis of a Malaysian film with the same title, directed by Jamil Sulong and first shown in 1983. The translation of the novel into French was also adapted and made into a film entitled *Les Gens de la rizière* (The People of the Rice-field)/ *Neak sre*, which was shown at the 1994 Cannes Film Festival. The film was directed Rithy Pahn, a Cambodian documentary film-maker who co-wrote the script for the film together with Eve Deboise. Therefore, instead of Lahuma and Jeha and their daughters, eking out a living in the paddy-fields of Malaysia and performing Islamic rituals, the film featured Vong Poeuv and his wife, Yim Om and their seven daughters, a Buddhist family of rice-growers in Cambodia, but with trials and tribulations often faced by farming communities.

Haslina Haroon is currently a lecturer at the School of Humanities, USM. She can be reached at haslina@usm.my

MR. GALAXY

Jonathan Chen
B. Comm. '05

Photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin



AS A YOUNG BOY, ASSOC PROF CHONG HON YEW HAD ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT LAY BEYOND THE HEAVENS OF THIS EARTH. WHILE GROWING UP IN AMPANG, HE DREAMED OF UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES THE WORLD GO ROUND OR TO A LARGER EXTENT, HOW THE ENTIRE UNIVERSE FUNCTIONS.

Dr Chong, as he is popularly known to those around him, is intensely passionate about astronomy, and his interest in the field has been nurtured for close to 40 years beginning from his school days in Maxwell School Kuala Lumpur.

His quest for understanding the heavens did not come easy as he did not have the opportunity to study at more prestigious schools with established astronomy clubs. Chong, however, refused to allow this to deter him in his pursuit of knowledge of the heavens.

"Back then, the only astronomy clubs formed with telescopes were in schools like St John's or Victoria Institution," he told *The Leader*.

"Furthermore, those who were keen on astronomy were few and far between. I was a lone ranger," he added.

Determined to quench his thirst for knowledge, Chong started off being an armchair astronomer and spent most of his waking hours just reading anything on astronomy which he could get his hands on and dreaming of going on space tours with the aid of his imagination.

"Purchasing or even making one's own telescope was quite an expensive matter in the past, so I just read a lot on astronomy," he said.

As he pored over books, magazines and other reading materials on astronomy, he soon found out astronomy went hand in hand with physics, a discovery which soon sparked his interest in the latter.

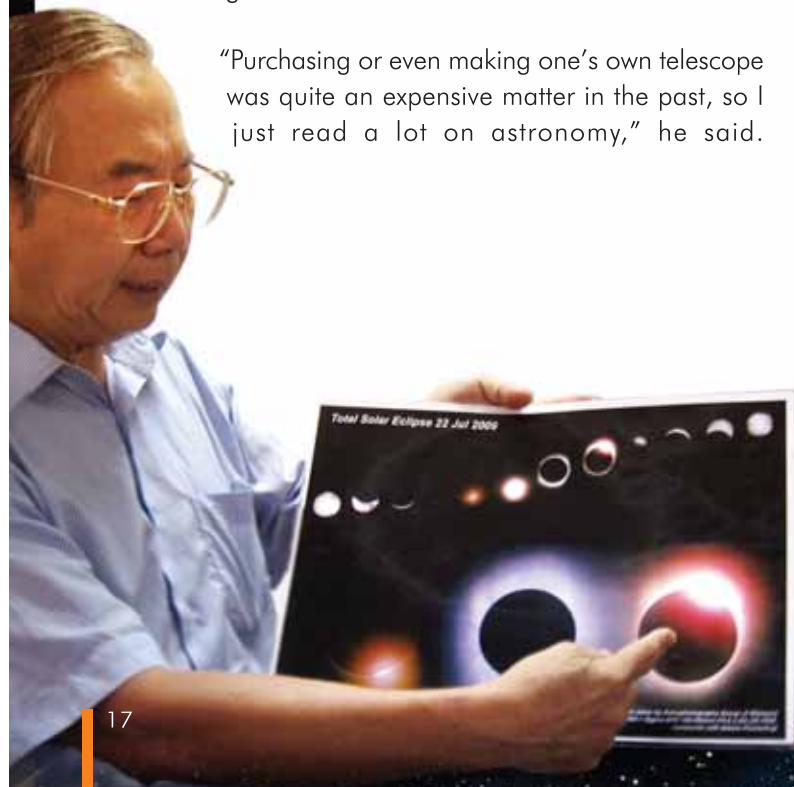
"I like physics because I feel that it's like studying the universe at the most fundamental level. For example, we all know about gravity, it exists here on earth and it exists right to the edge of the universe".

"Moreover, Einstein's field equation in his General Theory of Relativity can be applied anywhere in the universe. It can explain how the universe was born, how it is now, how it is going to die - which is a fascinating thing," he explained.

Not surprisingly, he chose to pursue an education in physics and in 1974, he graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Physics from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) before obtaining his Master of Science in Physics specialising in Information Theory a year later, also at USM.

Chong was then offered assistance by the French government as well as by USM's Academic Staff Training Scheme (ASTS) to pursue his doctoral studies at the *Université Grenoble and the Centre national de la recherche scientifique* (CNRS or French National Centre for Scientific Research) which he completed in 1979 specialising in solid state physics.

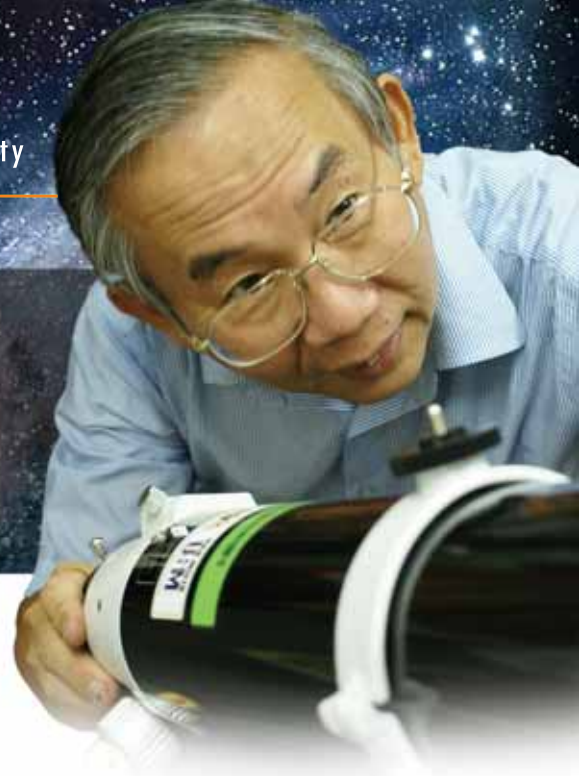
Upon returning to USM, Chong took it upon himself to go all out in spreading awareness and interest in astronomy to anyone and everyone. In 1983, he attempted to form USM's Astronomy Club, but the idea was rejected due to lack of funds. Undeterred, he kept pushing for the formation of the club, but was turned down three times again. However, Chong's efforts finally paid off when the club was finally formed in 1986.



Personality

Mr. Galaxy

“WHAT INTRIGUES ME ABOUT ASTRONOMY IS THE FACT THAT WE ANSWER SOME PRETTY INTERESTING QUESTIONS IN LIFE SINCE IT INVOLVES THE STUDY OF THE IMMENSELY BIG TO THE IMMENSELY SMALL TO EVERYTHING IN BETWEEN AT THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL LEVEL.”



“When we started out, we only had a pair of binoculars and a simple homemade refractory telescope, but that was all we needed,” Chong said, recalling the days when he and the club members stargazed at the old volleyball court opposite the School of Physics (now the new Health Centre).

Interestingly, after only one year of regular meetings and stargazing activities, Chong noticed that schoolchildren started joining the club activities. Within a year, outsiders heard about the club and started coming for club activities on a regular basis.

At that time, quite a number of USM members objected to the ‘invasion’ of outsiders, but after going through the hardships of his humble beginnings, Chong was not prepared to turn people away as it was his conviction that astronomy was open to anyone who had the desire to learn.

With his infectious passion for astronomy, it was no surprise that within the span of five years, he steered the Club to hold astronomy activities in most schools in the Northern Region, which left a positive impact in the schools, as seen by the formation of astronomy clubs soon after.

It is no secret that Chong likes to share knowledge and is an inspiration to those close to him to do the same. To date, the USM Astronomy Club has reached out to schools within the whole of Malaysia as well as in Singapore, with the exception of Sabah and Kelantan.

“What intrigues me about astronomy is the fact that we answer some pretty interesting questions in life since it involves the study of the immensely big to the immensely small to everything in between at the most fundamental level,” Chong explained, adding that his personal space-watching spectacles which never fail to leave him in awe are solar eclipses, meteor showers and the occasional glimpses of unidentified flying objects (UFOs).

To date, Chong has had the opportunity to witness two solar eclipses, one being the annular solar eclipse of August 1998 in Mersing and the longest total solar eclipse of the century on 22 July 2009 in Shanghai, China.

As for the future, Chong intends to continue on his quest to inspire others to take up an interest in the workings of our universe and to a larger extent provide hands-on training for teachers and educators to teach the subject in schools.

“We are very keen on promoting astronomy training courses with approval and recognition from the various education authorities here,” he said, adding that it would help to further promote love for and interest in the subject for future generations. 📌

Jonathan Chen is currently the Assistant Registrar at the Research Creativity Management Office (RCMO), USM. He can be reached at jonathanchen@rocketmail.com

Engineering 1988

The Pioneers



AB SUKOR
ZAKARIYA



ABDUL RAZALI
A RASHID



AHMAD FAIRUZ
MUHAMMAD
AMIN



AHMAD SUHAIMI
MOHD YUSOF



ANG KHENG
HUAT



AZAHARI MUSA



AZHAR IDRIS



AZIZAH
DRAHMAN



CHAI MENG FEE



CHEW MUN HO



DING BEE SIN



HUI KOK
LEONG



ISMAIL YUSOF



JOHARI KASIM



LAKBEER
SINGH BALKAR
SINGH



LAKSHMI
KANAGASABAI



LEE SEONG BOW



LEE YEE PENG



LIEW CHUW YEE



LIM CHUN THENG



LIM EWE KEAT



LIM YOON CHOY



LOH CHEE KUANG



MAHD ASRI
MAHMOOD



MOHAMAD
KASIM MOHD
SOM



MOHAMAD
SANI OSMAN



MOHD AMIR
ABAS



MUSTAFA KAMAL
SUHAIMEE



NG KENG TENG



NG YOKE BENG



NOR AZMAN
OMAR



RUZAINI AZIZ



SYED MOHD
ABU BAKAR
SYED HUSAIN



TAN BOON SEN



TAN TENG
WANG



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WANG CHIN PAT

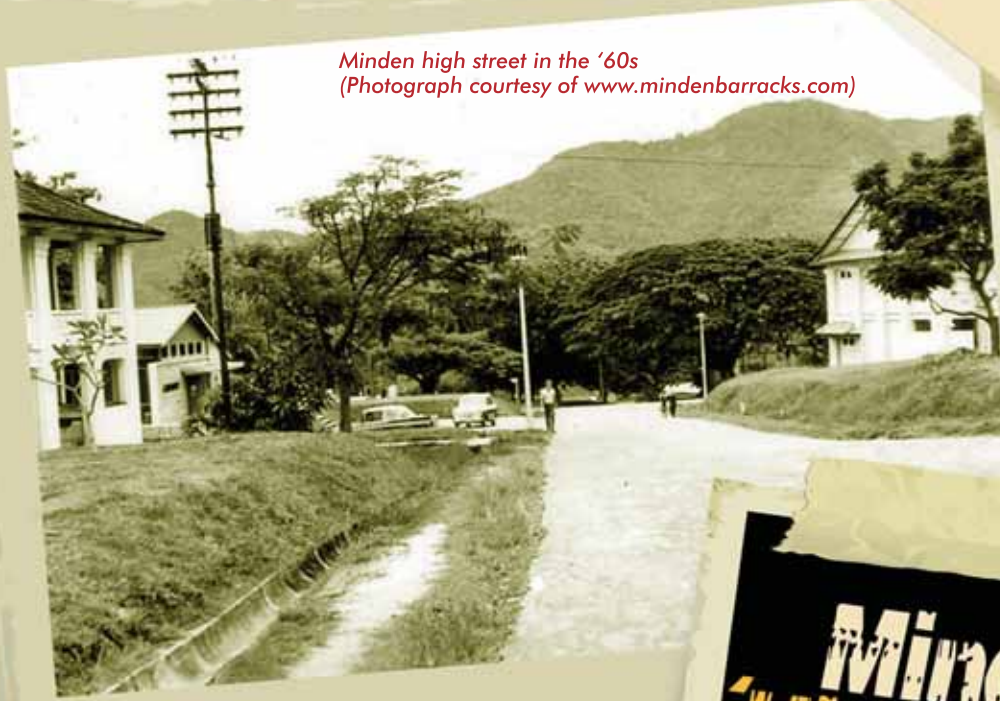


YAGASENA
APPANNAH



ZULFIKRI
HASHIM

Photographs provided by Data Processing and Records Unit, Registry Department, USM.
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Minden high street in the '60s
(Photograph courtesy of www.mindenbarracks.com)

Minden 'High Street'

Text and photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin

Heil Minden! But why is a German town found in Pulau Pinang? There is no massive tectonic upheaval to explain the phenomenon.

In fact Germany had never actually muscled in during either of the World Wars. Although BMWs and Mercedeses may have made significant inroads, there is no evidence of widespread 'Mindenization' despite the university's address bearing the famed German town, Minden. The name Minden has left a trace of the Anglo-Hanoverian 'DNA', enough to drive history buffs into frenzy because it could just be a hypothesis that it was named after a battle that took place during the mid-17th century in a town more than 6,000 miles away.

Minden 'High Street'

Notable old buildings which hold significant and commanding position along the high street are:

C09 USM International Office

D12 Muamalat and CIMB

D18 National Apex Development Indicators Centre

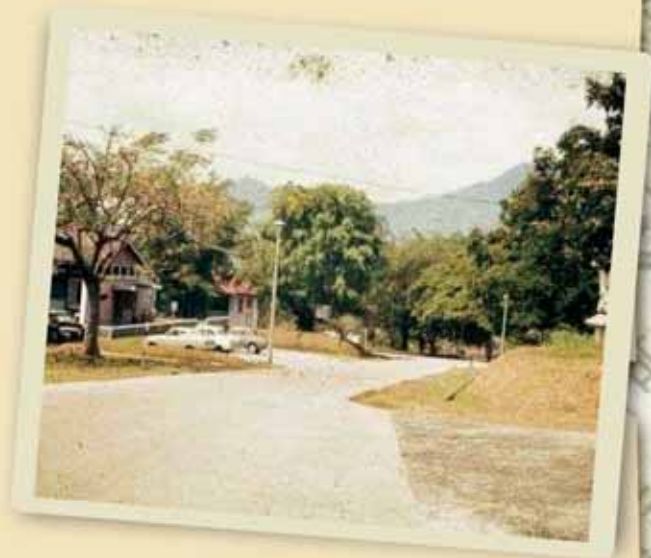
C18 Post Office

Sustaining Heritage

Tugu Transformasi

The irony is that it was the British who occupied the Minden in Pulau Pinang which was later 'invaded' by USM. By the time the army left, campus inhabitants were already sharing many things with their former British colonial authority: a language, regimented barracks, and panoramic hill streets. As of today, the campus has developed into an overgrown kampong whereby its humble 'high street' attracts a hive of activities.

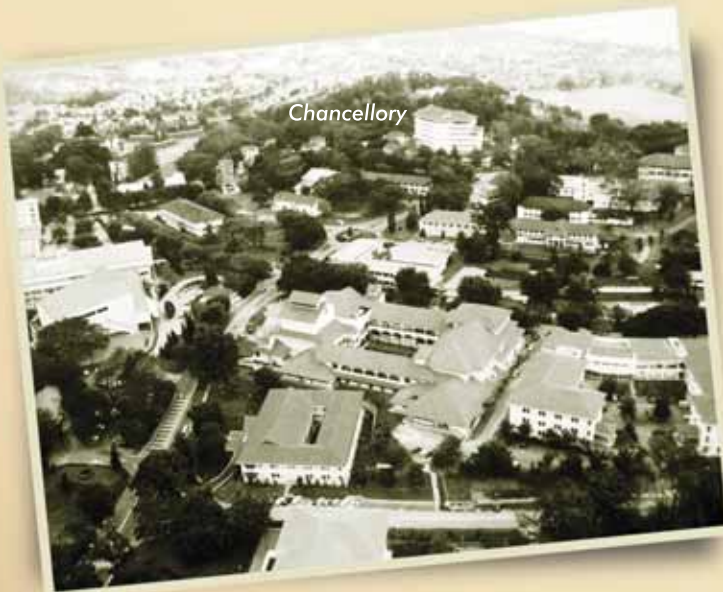
The campus main street with the suffix 'high street' is something to behold. It is befittingly described as a strategic location that receives most attention, particularly during pay days. Ever wonder what all the fascination is about? The main street has always been a place of changing scenes, emotions and fortunes from the days of old snub-nosed Bedford army trucks to the sleek SUV (Sports Utility Vehicles) with high wheels plying the thoroughfare. Minden high street has a quaint charm of its own, providing a sense of 'township' in miniature - admittedly without shophouses.



The 15-foot wide street and the iconic vista during Minden Barracks days
(Photograph courtesy of www.mindenbarracks.com)

Minden 'High Street'

The high street (dotted in red) in the 1990's
(Photograph courtesy of Pusat Teknologi Pengajaran dan Multimedia, USM)



The high street looking east towards the Chancellory
(Photograph courtesy of Pusat Teknologi Pengajaran dan Multimedia, USM)

It is neither as vibrant as Kuala Lumpur's Bukit Bintang high street, nor as sedate as Pulau Pinang's Balik Pulau town. This thriving downhill street in the heart of the campus has a blend of 'cowboy-town' vitality and rustic kampong ambience, lined with some old visual delights of army barracks. All of them coexisted in relative harmony, giving the street and its precincts a homely feel.

The street, a less than 400 meter main access road that runs from Bulatan Transformasi to Dataran Merah, is the principal backbone of the campus. There's something about the high street that makes it stand out from the rest but it is difficult to say what this crucial element is.

Can anyone recognise this street? Neither potions nor spells cast can remove the magic woven around in the environment. You can be forgiven if you mistook it for someplace elsewhere. Reminiscing on the good old '60s photographs, you would agree that certain iconic views have barely been touched by the years. A sheer delight at the first glimpse, the street scene gives a faint idea of what it was once like in its 'cowboy-town' glory... One can imagine that there were good reasons to encourage walking - notably it was energy efficient - and it was also quiet and with less traffic than now.

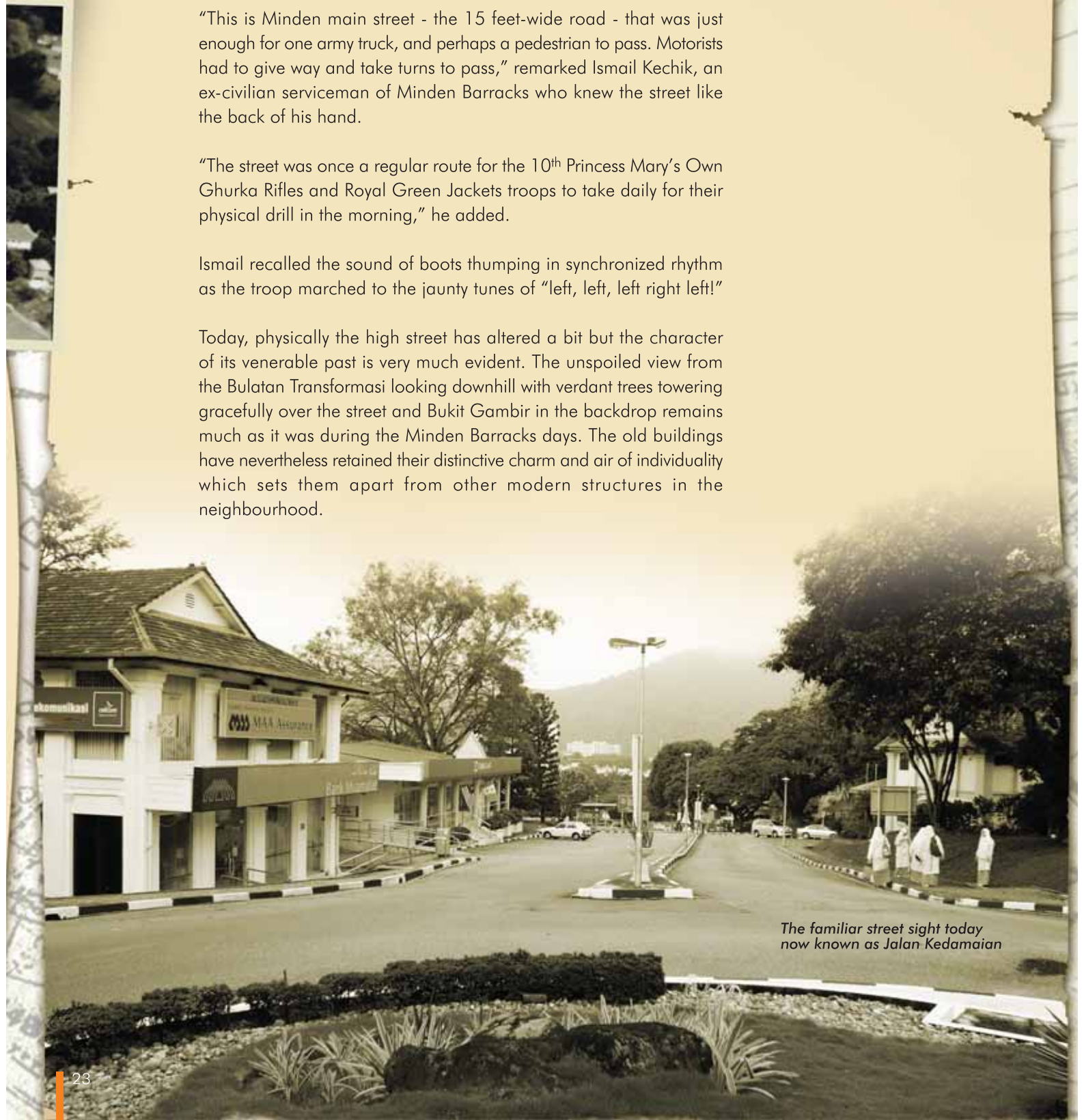
Minden 'High Street'

"This is Minden main street - the 15 feet-wide road - that was just enough for one army truck, and perhaps a pedestrian to pass. Motorists had to give way and take turns to pass," remarked Ismail Kechik, an ex-civilian serviceman of Minden Barracks who knew the street like the back of his hand.

"The street was once a regular route for the 10th Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles and Royal Green Jackets troops to take daily for their physical drill in the morning," he added.

Ismail recalled the sound of boots thumping in synchronized rhythm as the troop marched to the jaunty tunes of "left, left, left right left!"

Today, physically the high street has altered a bit but the character of its venerable past is very much evident. The unspoiled view from the Bulatan Transformasi looking downhill with verdant trees towering gracefully over the street and Bukit Gambir in the backdrop remains much as it was during the Minden Barracks days. The old buildings have nevertheless retained their distinctive charm and air of individuality which sets them apart from other modern structures in the neighbourhood.



*The familiar street sight today
now known as Jalan Kedamaian*

Minden 'High Street'

After going through several phases, the building is now the USM International Office

The prominent corner building Block 32 / D12, on the left (now, Muamalat Bank, with a new façade) hardly merits a second glance until one realises that it was formerly the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes, NAAFI, grocery shop. Block 35 / C9 (now, USM International Office) was once the home of the British Other Ranks army (BOR) married quarters. Block 37 / D17 (now National Apex Development Indicators Centre), during its illustrious history has served as Battalion Main Office. All well and good, the building conversion has notably enhanced the high street scene.



Traffic congestion is a daily affair, especially on pay day, along this street

The street is incessantly inundated by sights and sounds, and is perennially jam-packed with activities. Relatively busy by campus street standards, the traffic congestions that start when office hour begins and end after dusk each day is considered fairly normal. What will become of it in the future remains a vexing question. Minden high street is a blend of strange appropriateness and sometimes incongruity in the other sense. It is the blend that wins the day for this campus. The significance of this artery can never be more obvious as during the celebration period of the convocation; once closed, albeit temporarily, the whole campus mood changes. ▮

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

PASPORT
MALAYSIA

Hamima (left) and Thai student Sudarat who played tourist guide



Accidental The Ambassador

Hamima Dona Mustafa
B. A. '73

In 1971 Universiti Pulau Pinang (UPP) was two years old. Vice-Chancellor Prof Hamzah Sendut had selected Goh Ban Lee (School of Social Sciences), Osman Rashid and I (School of Cultural and Community Studies) to be 'student ambassadors', to pay courtesy visits to the rectors of the major universities of Thailand, Indonesia and Singapore. We were to meet the student leaders, as well as to establish goodwill ties for future cooperation in educational and cultural matters. What a way to spend the second year's long vacation after the grueling ten-course final examinations, I said to myself.

Our first destination was Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, Thailand. We found out how difficult it was to get our message across. Very few people spoke English then, even on campus. As we were trying to get our bearings, a girl of my age, in her early 20s, approached us.

"May I help you?" she said in English.

"Where is the rector's office, please?" I asked, much relieved that we have found someone we could communicate with.

She offered to take us there for which we were grateful. When we emerged from the meeting we found that she was waiting for us. She handed me a packet of souvenirs from Chulalongkorn University.

The Accidental Ambassadors

I was taken aback by her kindness. I need not have worried because that is her nature. Ever since that meeting 38 years ago Sudarat has been my good friend, almost like a sister.

Besides Chulalongkorn University we also visited Thammasart University, Kasesart University and Chiangmai University. The meetings were fruitful with promises of forthcoming collaborative activities.

We then proceeded to Indonesia where we were greeted by Malaysian students pursuing their degrees there. If in Thailand we had problems with halal food, in Indonesia we made up for our weight loss. The Malaysian students showered us with their hospitality. In Jakarta we visited Universitas Indonesia. In Bandung we went to the Institut Teknologi Bandung. In addition, we went to Bogor to visit the Bogor Agricultural University. We also made our way to Universitas Gajahmada in Jogjakarta. Apart from helping us meet with the university officials and student leaders the Malaysian students took us on their motorcycles to see the various tourist attractions such as the temples of Borobudur and Prambanan. I had to learn to sit sideways on the motorcycle for that was the way girls were supposed to ride pillion in Indonesia as well as in Thailand.

It was in Jogjakarta, Indonesia, that I had my most unforgettable episode. It was just before we left Jogjakarta to fly to Jakarta by Garuda, the Indonesian airlines. We were ready with our boarding passes when the plane touched down on the runway. It had just arrived from Bali. The Malaysian students were taking turns to shake hands with us to bid us goodbye. It took the airlines' personnel quite a while before they approached us to announce that the plane was full and that the three of us were not able to board.

We explained, using the Indonesian language, that we had to attend a reception hosted by our ambassador in Jakarta that evening. We had to go on that plane. Our words, however, fell on deaf ears.

The Malaysian students seemed resigned. I was not about to give up. I demanded to see the passenger list. I would not budge. Finally, the clerk showed it to me. Our three names had been struck by pencil and on top of each of our names were written, also in pencil, Western ones.

"Mana bisa begini, pak?" ("How could this be possible, sir?").

In the background, the Malaysian students told me to shut my mouth, not to say anything further.

Turning to Ban Lee and Osman, I continued, "We are boarding the plane."

I started to walk toward the plane parked about 500 meters away. I reached the third step before I felt hands grabbing me from the back and pulling me down from the steps.

"Jangan sentuh saya," ("Don't touch me,") I said to the two security guards on either side of me.



The Accidental Ambassadors

"Kami menurut perintah, ning," ("We are following orders, miss,").

As we reached the Malaysian group who had been watching the scene quietly near the boarding gate I was seething. Yet, there was nothing we could do. The plane took off shortly after that.

We were given a train ticket each for the twelve-hour overnight ride to Jakarta. Meanwhile, since it was only noon, we were given a day room each at the nearby first class Ambarukmur Hotel to await our train journey. The Malaysian male students who had been tensed earlier happily returned home to get their swimming trunks to enjoy the day in the hotel pool.

Our last stop in Indonesia was Medan, Sumatra, before moving on to Singapore, to meet student leaders at the University of Singapore.

When we returned to Pulau Pinang we had a meeting with the Vice-Chancellor to report on our trip. He listened attentively. Finally, turning to me, he asked if I wanted to say something.

"Why did you not let another girl come with me? The guys shared their expenses, especially on hotel rooms, whereas I had to pay extra. Furthermore, when these two guys went by themselves, especially in Thailand, I had to take care of myself."

With a smile, Hamzah said, "I purposely did that. I wanted to see how you survived." ■

Dr Hamima Dona Mustafa is currently a lecturer at the Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA), USM. She can be reached at hamima@usm.my





Burung Punai Gading on the *halban* tree
in front of the Chancellory

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus



The Other Residents

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

Brooop, broop, broop, broop.

Those who turn their heads to locate the sound will be presented with quite a spectacular sight.

From their well camouflaged presence in the *sena* (angsana) trees, a flock of about 40-50 *punai daun* (green pigeons) would suddenly be visible. They would continue this ritual of flocking to and leaving from berry-laden trees every day for about four months.

The *punai* is not alone in attracting attention during the months of October to February. Larger flocks of *perling* (starlings) are even noisier. Let us rephrase that...*perlings* are the noisiest, especially when feeding on the abundant *ara* (figs).

Perlings and *punais* often congregate with *belatok hijau/takor* (coppersmith barbets) and the local *malakerbaus* (mynahs) on a single tree to feed, causing quite a raucus with the sound of fruits dropping to the ground. The fallen fruits are never wasted; they are consumed by ground foraging animals or in turn sprout new trees.

In the mornings and late afternoons, in tree-tops, on forest edges, in the fields and even in the lakes and streams in Minden there is a buzz of avian activities.



A male *Burung Sambar Kuning*

They come from the north, some with ring tags around their legs to tell where they are from. They fly for reasons still mysterious to humans. Popular belief maintains that they leave their resident countries to escape cold winters. But why do others remain at home? Others say they fly to locations with abundant food. The same question applies. Also, from their home locations how do they know where to stop and why do they keep flying south after finding food at a certain location? Let humans wonder; they are here, even in USM, Pulau Pinang.

The first to arrive are usually the *burung sambar* (flycatchers). The *sambar kuning* (yellow-rumped flycatcher) and *sambar perang* (brown flycatcher) add more colours and activities to those of the resident *sambar biru* (Thickle's Blue Flycatcher). This year, the *sambar kuning* was sighted as early as the second day of September. Even the *sambar ekor panjang* (paradise flycatcher) made a brief appearance in the same month after an absence of over twenty years! The *sambars* are amusing sights despite their small sizes. Beautiful in shapes and patterns, they would make sudden appearances follows their monosyllabic 'teck' shy calls. They would perch only briefly before darting off to catch insects on the fly.



Birik-birik is like the *Burung Sambar*, a skillful hunter, snapping insects on the fly.



A female *Burung Sambar Ekor Panjang*



A female *Burung Sambar*

The Other Residents

No Visa No Problem

Burung balai (shrikes), splendid with their small eagle-like beaks and streamlined bodies, are also early arrivals. The masks over the eyes of some species such as the brown shrike, add a dashing touch. As for the tiger shrikes, their rapid-fire harsh calls has earned them the new name of *Burung M-16* in some northern states.

If one is patient, there is even the possibility of spotting the chestnut-winged cuckoos, *merbah kepala hitam* (black-hooded orioles) and the elegant *merbah surih* (striped-throated bulbul).

In the open fields fringing the durian valley, the silent *pipit hutan* (forest wagtail) is a refreshing sight. Like a striped ghost it appears quietly and only its movements betray its well-camouflaged design.



Burung Balai



Merbah Surih



Merbah Kepala Hitam



Chestnut-winged cuckoo



Pipit Hutan

No Visa No Problem

If not for the wagging of the tail, this **Punai Batu** (Grey Wagtail) is difficult to notice



Another quiet visitor is the magnificent *punai tanah* (emerald dove) which seems to love walking than flying. Its green wings, white forehead, bright pink beak and dark eyes combine to present a beauty unmatched by the other pigeons and birds found in USM. Its quiet nature of walking down to the stream in the durian valley to forage for food gives an added touch of elegance. It only flies away when it senses danger.



Punai Tanah

The streams and lakes attract *pucungs* (herons), *bangaus* (egrets), *pekakas* (kingfishers), *kedidis* (sandpipers), *repangs* (plovers) and *pipits* (wagtails). Because of the open environment, they sense threats more easily. However, spotting them is a thrill, knowing that they are there only temporarily. Soon the place would be quiet from screechings and tail-wagging.



Javan Pond-Heron



Burung Tampung Baju



Kedidi



Although known as the Common Kingfisher, the **Pekaka Udang** can only be sighted in USM during certain months

They may be here only for a few months, but these temporary residents have no way of realising how enriching their sights and sounds are in the campus. A majority of campus residents too may have overlooked these additional assets since they appear only for a short while. These visitors will be visiting Minden annually without the hassles faced by their human jetsetters. To them a visa is not a problem. 🏠

Layang-layang during visiting season are busy nest builders



Some of the birds that are rarely seen on campus like the **Pekaka Merah** (left) and **Pucung Harimau**

The **Perling** loves the same fruits as the **Punai**

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

Because of YOU SMA

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

Azmi

Muhammad

Ahmed

Naghah

Fanan

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

Because of youSM

Occasionally you would be happy to come across an alumni who is proud to have a son or daughter studying in USM. How would you feel if you meet a non-alumnus who has four children and one son-in-law studying in USM at the same time? Now they are all USM alumni pursuing post-graduate degrees?

Naghm, Muhammad, Ahmad, and Fanan left Jordan to study in USM through the recommendation and encouragement of their Azmi Qasim Al-Madi, who funds all of them for their stay here. Only the family's youngest is studying in Dubai.

"USM is strong in research", comments Azmi during one of his trips here. He is a professor of mathematics, the Dean of Scientific Research, and the President of Al-Zaytuna Private University which he co-founded with three other friends in 1991.

Naghm admitted that she did not know much about USM or Pulau Pinang until recommended by her father. "Being an academician he did some research". His research and his concern for his children's future led him visit Pulau Pinang in 2005.

"I like Penang very much" he would repeat. "Kuala (his reference for Kuala Lumpur) is nice also, but I like Penang better".

He accompanied his daughter Nagham to enrol for a Masters programme in the School of Computer Sciences in 2005, and to find acceptable accommodation for her. They soon returned to Jordan. Late that year, Nagham returned with her husband, Khadr and their two sons, 'Amr and Samir to accompany her in their E-Park apartment, a stone's throw from the campus.

Clockwise: Ahmad (in red shirt), Abla, Azmi, Khadr, Samir, Nagham, celebrating 'Eid at the house of Sharifah Norhaidah, Khadr's supervisor



In June 2006, Khadr was accepted as a Ph. D candidate in the School of Education.

Ahmad and Muhammad soon followed their sister's footsteps. They received their Masters in Computer Science in 2007 and 2008 respectively. Muhammad has even mastered the *Bahasa Melayu*, almost always speaking in Malay when conversing with the locals. Both brothers are now pursuing their doctorates. Fanan is the only one who started as an undergraduate in the School of Instructional Multimedia.

Naghm (standing) and Khadr (right) with family members in Jordan (Photograph courtesy of Nagham)



All the while, the patriarch is always in touch with them, frequently visiting them, and taking time off to visit 'Kuala' and other parts of the country. His latest trip was with his wife, Abla Khayri Jarrar to celebrate the recent 'Eidul-Fitr, and the acceptance of Fanan as the latest in the AL-Madi line to be accepted into USM's graduate programme. ■

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

USM official car entrance sticker for 90/91 session.

Pusat Seni then, with a new construction at the back



Driving Down Memory Lane

Text and photographs by
Fern Helfand

Beautifully coloured *baju kurung*, white buildings with red terracotta roofs nestled under lush, flowering tropical trees, a diversity of smiling faces and so many of the wonderful friends I made at USM were some of the first things I thought about after receiving a surprise e-mail from Alec Chin.

Driving Down Memory Lane

Alec was one of the students who studied photography with me during my tenure at Pusat Seni from 1989-1992. Looking through the USM website, I am excited to see a number of familiar names listed under faculty and alumni. Especially eye-catching are the names of students who were at USM while I was there, including the current Dean of the School of Arts, Assoc Prof Rahman Mohamed.

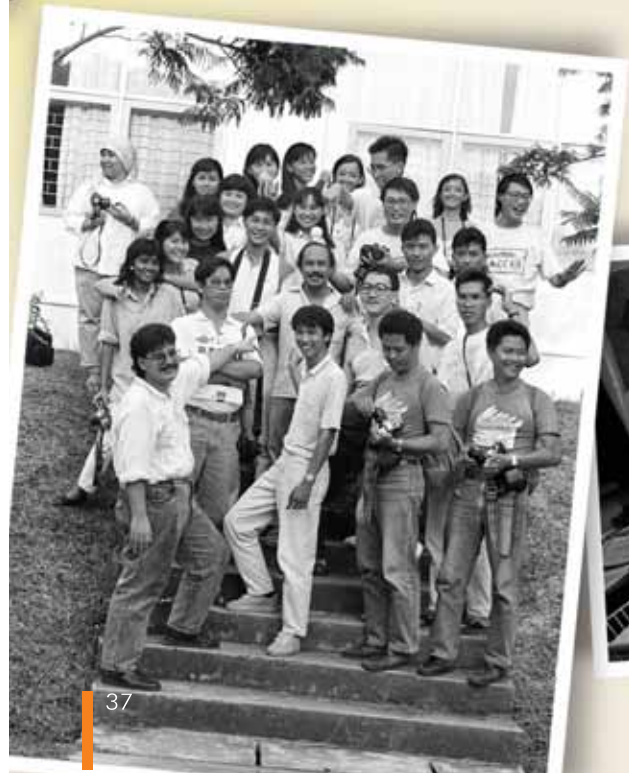
In many ways, it seems so long ago. Ismail Hashim, an accomplished photographer, was teaching graphic design. I remember how exciting it was the day his brand new Macintosh computer and scanner arrived complete with Adobe Illustrator and Photoshop, which no one knew how to use. Ray Langenbach, an American guest professor teaching sculpture and performance, was using something new called e-mail on the World Wide Web, the application of which most people had never heard of. Janet Liyana Pillai was a young and energetic performer with jet black hair, and Dr Tan Sooi Beng was creating innovative, interdisciplinary music performances on and off campus.

I now live and teach in a small city in the mountains of British Columbia in Western Canada. The cool fall weather has arrived and a light covering of snow has started to appear high up on the mountain slopes. I, however, have spent the last couple of days in the warm glow of the tropics reminiscing and re-experiencing Malaysia as I go through my old photographs and journals. Having to choose only a few highlights to write about is difficult.



*Sitting in my dragon red ,
1960 Austin Riley*

*My photoshopped Photo III class (to
make everyone looks good!) in
1990, in front of Pusat Seni*



*Ray Langenbach with his
computer in his office*



*Ismail Hashim in the
graphic studio*



Driving Down Memory Lane

I will start with the art exhibitions and performances that showcased some of the great work being done at Pusat Seni. The students' off-campus displays and on-campus graduation shows were especially rewarding for me as an instructor. I saw the evolution and accomplishments of my students and was always so proud of them. In 1990, the senior class had an exhibition in Pulau Pinang at Artville. Besides bringing their work to the greater public, the collective class experience of curating the show, hanging the work and celebrating the opening with family and friends was enriching, and the first step towards professionalism. The annual graduation shows, of course, marked the apex of student achievement and were a chance to see work from all areas of Pusat Seni. Each year USM hosted a memorable celebration for our graduates at the Muzium dan Galeri USM (now known as *Muzium dan Galeri Tuanku Fauziah*).



Posing with a student's sculpture. Ray Langenbach (seated), Askandar Unglehr (German and French language lecturer), and me.



Tan Sooi Beng (first from left) and her performers at the Lima Lima Beach Street Exhibition and Performance

Lima Lima Beach Street (literally translated as *Fifty-five Beach Street*) was the name of an interdisciplinary exhibition Pusat Seni (Art Centre) presented in 1990. The visual artists contributed works based on inspirations from Beach Street in the old part of Georgetown while Tan Sooi Beng and her students created a unique sound piece based on what they saw and heard while

walking along the downtown street. This original combination of Pulau Pinang sights and sounds was presented in a temporary site at 55 Beach Street, of course.

I also had the great privilege of being one of the main organisers of and participants in a USM faculty exhibition entitled *Bengawan Solo Sekali Sekala*, which traveled to Balai Seni, Maybank Building, Kuala Lumpur, and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. It was an amazing experience for me as a visiting lecturer at USM to be part of the artistic community of the University and contribute to the greater Malaysian art scene. We were honoured by having our exhibition at Universiti Kebangsaan opened by the son of the then Sultan of Selangor.

Driving Down Memory Lane

I have to mention my little car in this trip down memory lane. Many people knew me on campus as the foreign instructor in the little Dragon Red, 1960 Austin Riley. I loved that car despite the fact I had a huge reach to change gears and it had no air conditioning. I often had to stop for a cold drink because I just couldn't stand the heat another minute, especially when caught in traffic coming home from USM.

A rather memorable day at USM occurred when we arrived at work to find the entrances to the Pusat Seni faculty offices at the back of the art building bombarded by waste materials from the new complex being constructed just above us. It seems that the construction crew did not think too much of our historical army barracks and just threw their debris down the hill. We were horrified and amused all at the same time. Windows were smashed, air conditioners were crushed and walls were attacked. One plank even embedded itself into the office door of a member of Pusat Seni staff.



Zakaria Ali, an academic, on the day of construction rubble attack



My USM staff card



Sugu Kingham at Gulam Sawar's (left) house during 'Eid ul-Fitr

From Ramadan and Hari Raya to Chinese New Year and Thaipusam, the traditional celebrations of life and yes, of course, the wide array of the most amazing and delicious food in all of South East Asia, appear high on my list of the best memories from Pulau Pinang. After living and working in the diverse environment that is Malaysia, I believe I have more understanding of cultures so different from my own. As numerous Asian international and new Canadian students pass through my classes at the University of British Columbia, I am better able to relate to their experiences, understand their values and support their interests while they study so far from home.

All in all, it is the people I met during my time at USM that have had the most lasting impact on my life. And I hope that I too enriched the lives of those I encountered all these many years ago, especially my many wonderful students. 🇲🇾

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Apa khabar?

Nor Rafizah Md Zain
Photographs by Yusuf Suid

'Apa khabar?' is a phrase that helps you to build bridges without being an engineer. The phrase simply means 'How do you do?' in Bahasa Malaysia. The expected response would be *'Khabar baik, terima kasih'* ('I am fine, thank you'). With such a simple approach, bridges are automatically built between people.

In USM, this approach enables foreign students to integrate and be part and parcel of the global family, thereby softening cultural shock that some may experience. *The Leader* interviews these students and it showed an interesting response and for different purposes too.

Oghowem Friday (Nigeria)

"I've been in Malaysia for more than two years and I have many Malay friends. They do teach me Bahasa Malaysia and I find it quite interesting. My experiences here are quite educational.

"I love to say *'Apa khabar'* and *'Sudah makan?'* when I meet my Malay friends. Another word I know is *'Saya cinta kamu'* but I cannot say that to all my friends. I've been in USM for about two months but before this I was studying in a private college in Pulau Pinang. I think it is good that every one should learn Bahasa Malaysia because the Malays here are so friendly."



Ronak Etemadpour (Iran)

"I have passed a Bahasa Malaysia paper. Bahasa Malaysia is very different from other international languages such as English and French. Malaysians are polite and their languages reflect their own culture. Even after passing the paper I can't really speak Malay. I still need help from my friends and I will teach my family members some of the Malay words when I return to Iran."

Apa Khabar?

Tayyebeh Pourhassan (Iran)

"Malay language is very hard for me. I can't understand it even though I've been in Malaysia for about four years. I can't even speak Malay. For me, Malaysian people are so good in both languages, Bahasa Malaysia and English. In my opinion, it is very hard to learn the Malay language and it is not used in other countries."



Homam Reda Kamel El-Taj (Palestine)

"I know many words in Bahasa Malaysia but I rarely use these words since I am dealing with people in the University. I mean that most of the students and staff speak good English. Anyhow, the most popular words a foreigner may use are words pertaining to food such as, *makan* (eat), *minum* (drink), *tidak pedas* (not spicy), *tidak chili* (no chili), *nasi tambah* (extra rice), *roti* (bread), *sikit ais* (a little ice) and the useful word that we need to use when we are purchasing things is *mahal* (expensive).

"The culture of Malaysia is the same as any other Muslim country in the sense that there is a mosque to pray and we can hear the *azan* five times a day. According to my observation, Malaysians take five meals a day while we have only three. They eat rice for all meals while we don't eat rice except for lunch but even then, rarely. The culture of my country, Palestine, is so much different from Malaysia where I spent 5 years of my life. Here, all races live in peace and harmony and that makes me feel safe. It is like I am living with a big family. I would like to find out why and how Malaysians do certain things."

Muhammedali A Bharmal (India)

"Besides having a wonderful learning experience in USM, I learned a lot about the Malay language and culture with my Malaysian friends. 'Apa Khabar?' is 'Aap Kaise Hoo' whereas 'USM sangat cantik' (USM has a beautiful campus) means 'USM Bahut Khoobsorat Jagah Hai' in Hindi. I've stayed in Malaysia for 6 years and had the opportunity to *balik kampung* whenever my Malaysian friends went back to their hometown.

With the pollution that we are facing now, I admire how this country can preserve its beautiful places, cities, beaches and forests. This is a real wealth which future generations might not have a chance to experience, if it is not protected.

My sincere advice to the USM community is to strengthen and protect the Malaysian culture and traditions. Be proud of your culture and promote it to the world. If Malaysians blindly emulate western culture and tastes in the name of modernisation, they will only be exploited by people who are opportunists." ■



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Touching Hearts

Text and photographs by
Haslina Haroon

Anyone who has been here at USM for the past five years would not have failed to notice the ever-increasing international student population on campus. While some may regard these foreign students as merely a part of the campus community, for me at least, their presence has not only contributed to campus diversity but has made me realise the importance of cross-cultural awareness.

The first foreign doctoral student I had some years ago definitely taught me something about cultural differences. While I preferred to keep my greetings brief during all my supervisory sessions, not venturing beyond a simple 'Hello' and the customary 'How are you?', this foreign student clearly indicated to me through his mannerisms and behavior that he much preferred what seemed to me a rather lengthy and continuous exchange of greetings and pleasantries, often enquiring about my health and the well-being of each and every member of my immediate and extended family as well as providing a welter of details about his immediate and extended family, the weather back home and so on. I realised, in retrospect, that I must have appeared cold, rushed and hostile to my foreign student because of my unwillingness to partake in what to him was an important ritual.

If the greeting was expected to be lengthy, the leave-taking was even more elaborate. Without going into specific details, I can say that ending the supervisory session was always problematic. My foreign friend was always lavish with his praises for the higher being and for me, and extremely profuse in his apologies for taking up my time. This highly ritualistic behavior would always end with his extravagant promise of unconditional commitment and unstinting devotion to his doctoral work. An unexpected ringing of the phone or the sudden appearance of a colleague at such a time was always welcomed, as it often offered an automatic and instant and more importantly unproblematic way of ending the long-winded leave-taking. I initially believed that these were the personal habits of this particular student but it later became apparent, after an exchange of details with friends who were in the same predicament, that these were in fact cultural norms.

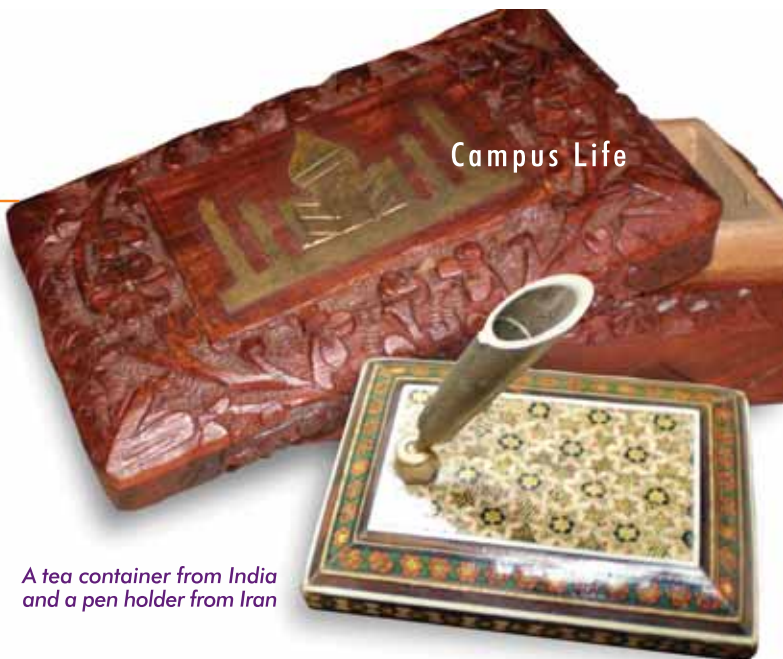


Touching Hearts

Gift-giving also became an extremely delicate issue. While it is not encouraged, and students are frequently reminded of this unwritten rule, the tradition is deeply rooted in certain cultures that students often do not take heed of this advice. This is especially true of students who come from cultures where gift-giving has become a symbol of respect, gratitude and generosity. Thus, some of the edible items that have come my way include Yemeni coffee (which I received together with a bit of historical information - the word 'mocha' actually originated from Al-Makha, a port city in Yemen from where Yemeni coffee is often exported), a small container of *za'faran* (and from this comes the English word 'saffron'), several jars of *tahini* (sesame paste), tubs of pistachios, beautifully-wrapped gaz (nougat), a tray of *baklava* (sweet pastry) and probably a lifetime supply of *zerezhk* (barberries). To refuse a gift, I was told, would be impolite but being Malay, I stuck to the tradition of refusing the gift several times before finally giving in and accepting it.

Containers of saffron threads (left) and cookies from Iran

The hospitality extended by foreign students too can sometimes be rather overwhelming. I was once invited to the home of a foreign student who was celebrating his success in his viva. Upon the arrival of me and my family at his house, we were swiftly ushered into the living area and before we could even settle down, tea was already being brought out from the kitchen. I noticed that during the conversation, my host kept an eye on our teacups, making sure that any half-filled teacup was quickly replenished. We then proceeded to lunch. The wife had prepared a sumptuous spread for us, with probably enough food to feed a small village.



A tea container from India and a pen holder from Iran

Before leaving, I thanked the generous host for the wonderful food, and sensing that the wife had noticed that I had more than my share of the delicious cauliflower pickles that she had prepared, I made sure to mention how lovely everything was, especially in reference to the said pickled vegetable. Needless to say, two days later, the student arrived unannounced at my room, bearing two large jars of the said vegetable and profusely apologising on behalf of his wife for not being able to immediately provide me with the delicacy when I mentioned how much I enjoyed them before leaving his house two days earlier. I was wrecked with guilt and at the same time taken aback - my praise for the wonderful food was sincere, and it never crossed my mind that he would respond to my praises by giving me more of the delicacy. I learnt my lesson - in the culture of my foreign friend, any show of admiration for a certain item by a guest invited to the home must always be followed by giving the said item to the guest.

I can say that having foreign students in our midst has helped in making me more culturally educated and more aware of the norms and behavior that we are not normally used to. But perhaps more importantly, the presence of international students on campus creates an opportunity for us to understand and assess our own beliefs, sometimes misleading and unfounded, about people from other cultures, and also a chance for us to learn about and eventually rise above our own cultural prejudices. 🇲🇾

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This biennial Balikampus was just as exciting as any other year when we met up with fellow alumni who 'migrated' back to USM. Our being a USM alumnus is the tie that binds us regardless of our age. Each time finding ourselves two years older but we can still laugh and share the fond stories of our experiences that we had. We never run short of such stories that take us down memory lane.



The Island in the Rear-view Mirror

Augustine Wong Ming Kong
B. Mgmt. '03

For this recent three-day event, we had a 'city tour' programme in our itinerary on 24 October. I was excited about the afternoon trip because it reminds us of the days when we have to queue up for the bus... the difference now is that we are very much older.

There was not a quiet moment in the shuttle bus as the fun was inevitably revved up by Kak Huzaimah (Kak Hu) and Kak Ani who entertained us with old favourites and side splitting jokes. The rest sang along. It brought back old memories of the time I first came to USM and went on a similar tour.



Our first stop was the Teochew Cendol at Lebu Keng Kwee, off Jalan Penang, in the inner city of George Town. The thirst made the cendol taste even better as the green noodle in coconut milk and thick brown sugar syrup irrigated the parched throat. One word to describe the sensation: heavenly! My first visit to the stall was during my first year in USM and I had cendol with my friends.

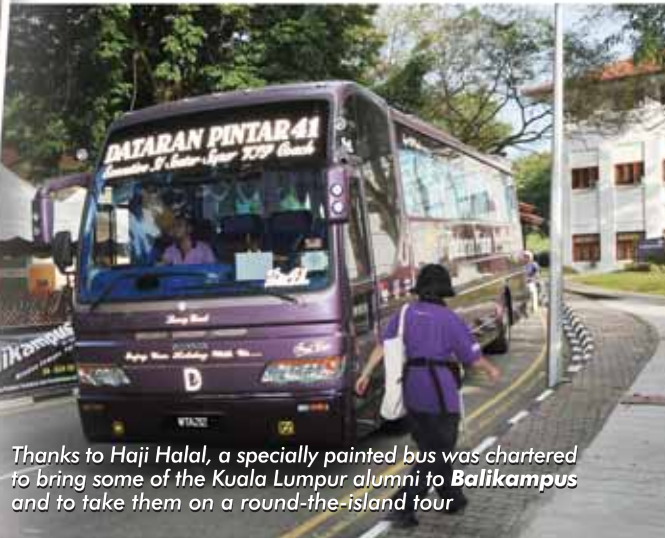


The writer relating his campus experiences to Zaibo (B. A. '90), a well known comedian, the MC for the **Curahan Kasih** dinner

Then many of us made a surprising discovery that Penang is also famous for its *Roti Benggali* (a type of bread with a hard crust) when we visited Ismalia Bakery at Jalan Transfer. I found that the fresh-from-the-oven *roti* (bread) is almost like the *Roti Hainan* in texture. The *roti* was sliced and each slice was given a generous spread of *kaya* (egg custard). Many of us could not resist the temptation and bought loaves of it to be consumed on the bus.

The shuttle bus then made its way towards to the stretch of touristy Tanjung Bungah and Batu Feringghi. The gleaming white sands and casuarinas trees reminded us of the day the tsunami struck these beaches on 26 December 2004. There are definite changes at these places from what we last saw when we were students: there were more shops and stalls, largely catering for the tourists. At Tanjung Bungah we stopped for piping hot *goreng pisang* (banana fritters).

It then went to Balik Pulau via Teluk Bahang, passing by the beautiful Teluk Bahang Dam. The narrow road snaked along the relatively steep contour with many hairpin turns. The bus passed the Titi Kerawang Waterfall. I recall coming to this scenic spot with my friends during my third year at USM.



Thanks to Haji Halal, a specially painted bus was chartered to bring some of the Kuala Lumpur alumni to **Balikampus** and to take them on a round-the-island tour

Upon arrival at Balik Pulau we homed in on its *laksa janggus*. I wolfed down the bowl of the *laksa* at the stall. The aroma of the soup was good enough to cause your mouth to salivate at a price of just RM 1.20 for a small bowl. No wonder Penang is known as a food haven.

As we journey on, we saw some padi fields along the way before heading back to Georgetown. It was really a tour round the island. The bus made a stop near Sungai Nibong for some who want to buy some Penang *jeruk* (pickles) made from mango, Salak nut, and nutmeg. By the time we boarded the bus it was almost 6.20 pm and it took another 20 minutes to return to Anjung Budi, USM, for the *Curahan Kasih* dinner scheduled at 8pm. It was an exhilarating trip and a tiring one as well. As what people say, you cannot experience swimming by standing by the poolside, neither can you experience the trip round the island by reading this article. You have to participate in *Balikampus* and take part in the round island tour as what we did. We will look forward to seeing you in 2011. 🇲🇾

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Beyond The Gates

Sunny Side Up

Text and photographs by
Yong Chek Yoon

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin

A condominium block in the Sunny Point Complex area



A satellite view of the cluster of condominiums around Sunny Point Complex



The location of the area around Sunny Point Complex off Jalan Batu Uban has proven to be popular among foreign exchange students, especially those from Europe, who seek out-of-campus accommodation. These students prefer condominium or apartment-style living with all the trappings of 'home' and can afford renting such accommodation as those found around the area.

Within this strategic enclave, Sunny Ville was one of the earliest apartment projects, completed in 1994. This was followed by a flurry of construction projects resulting in E-Park, N-Park and Villa Sri Kenanga which were completed within the next three years. Besides being within walking distance of USM, the buildings overlook the panoramic Penang Channel and are just a stone's throw away from the coastal highway that leads to the heart of George Town within less than 20 minutes. In support of the residential community there are also grocery outlets, a food court and other supporting services.

Among the group of foreign students who arrived recently are Mikael Andersson and Linda Moornerod (Sweden), Juergen Kneissl and Mailius Meier (Germany), Laurel Veitch (Canada), Fantina Barrera Rodriquez (Mexico), and Pinja Koski (Finland).

The Leader met the group at Wendy's condominium unit at E-Park recently. Wendy, as she preferred to be called, is a Penangite who has been helping many foreign students living in the area for the past five years. She ran errands for them and even chauffeured them to the doctor when they fell ill.

"I am delighted to help them out," Wendy said. She wishes that Malaysian students could receive the same help when they are overseas.

All the seven students have heard about USM, mostly from former exchange students, prior to their coming to Pulau Pinang. Advice was also given on finding accommodation outside the campus.

Linda observed, "Malaysia is a beautiful, multicultural country with lots, and lots of nice food. It is a country with friendly people."

(Left to right) Mailius Meier, Pinja Koski, Linda Moornerod, and Wendy



Sunny Side Up



Juergen Kneissl (right) and Mikael Andersson

She found an air-conditioned condominium unit, complete with a gymnasium and a swimming pool, at E-Park for a reasonable rental rate. However, she took a long time to get used to the sweltering weather... and the haphazard traffic.

"There are few pavements for pedestrians who have to share the road with vehicles," she said. "It can be scary."

Juergen said that his friends recommended him to rent an apartment unit although it may be more expensive compared to living in a University residence. However, converting his allowance from Euro into Malaysian Ringgit made it affordable. "Given the comfort, I have no regrets," he remarked.

Having air-conditioned unit gives Mailius a reprieve from the hot and humid climate he was not used to. Moreover, he chose to stay outside the campus because most foreign students do so and, like Juergen, he could make full use of the facilities found in the condominium block.

Whatever the students heard or read about Pulau Pinang and USM, a surprise awaited them. It was the profusion of cultures and variety of food that amazed them when they arrived from their respective countries.

"The life here is so different from where I came from in Canada and the experience is enriching," said Veitch. It is a new experience for foreign exchange students like Laurel who had heard about Pulau Pinang from a friend who had also been on a foreign exchange programme at USM previously.



Fantina Barrera Rodriquez (right) and Mailius Meier

Fantina vaguely knew about Malaysia but had heard about USM from the last batch of students who returned to Mexico. She came about five months ago, enjoyed her stay and is amazed by the fact that Malaysia is truly a melting pot of many cultures.

Pinja had not heard about Malaysia and did not regret 'discovering' it. Despite being in the country for the first time, she did not find any problem in adapting to the campus life

in USM or Pulau Pinang. In fact she has taken to love *roti canai*, *roti pisang* and *tandoori* chicken with *naan* bread.

The students would be packing their luggage and heading for home when their semester ends in November. We hope that they can also take home wonderful memories of their stay here to share with their friends.

USM has been receiving a steady stream of exchange students from Europe, Asia and the Americas since the mid-1990s under the aegis of the Study Abroad Programme. There is an average of 70-80 exchange students from overseas studying in USM each semester. New student exchange agreements are being considered that will enable USM to play host to an increasing number of students from abroad. The international programme is a two-way process; correspondingly an expanded exchange arrangement will provide opportunities for an equal number of USM students to spend a semester at the counterpart overseas universities and experience a different study environment. 🇲🇾

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@Anjung Budi

Students for Environment

More than 60 members of the USM Environmental Club gathered for their 'Eid ul-Fitr at Anjung Budi on 10 October. The Club being a strong advocate for sustainable living, awarded prizes to several campus cafeteria operators for eliminating styrofoam in packing food and encouraging students to utilise reusable containers instead.



Sharing Joy

More than 250 alumni descended upon Anjung Budi, their 'common home', for the first 'Eid ul-Fitr held on 29 September. Friends from the campus community also attended the hi-tea event organised jointly by Pejabat Pemaajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni and Persatuan Alumni USM. The event underscored the bond of friendship that exists among guests from varied ethnic background to celebrate each other's festive occasions.

New Place for Weddings

Anjung Budi is fast gaining popularity among the campus community as the ideal wedding place. Jaslin Hj Dahlan (sister of a lecturer in the Graduate School of Management) and Yahya Hj Suboh held a wedding reception for 300 family members and guests at Anjung Budi on 2 August.

On 9 August, it was the turn for Sebrina Zulkifli (staff of the Co-curriculum Planning Centre) to tie the knot with beau Abdul Hafeez Abdul Rahman at the same venue which was attended by 1,000 guests.



Text by Saw Cheang Kee, Yong Check Yoon and Yusuf Suid. Photographs by Mohamed Talhah Idrus and Yong Check Yoon.



The Balikampus Happening

Balikampus (23 - 25 October) were three fun-filled days of makans, cycling, buggy-riding, games, auction, tree planting, medical check-up, music and more music. The event brought together different generations in a spirit of USMhood. Two alumni were recognised with the inaugural Anugerah Alumni Budiman (The Benevolent Alumni Award).

Photographs by Mohamed Talhah Idrus, Yong Check Yoon, Yusuf Suid, Mohd Fairus Md Isa and Idris Md Yusuf.





Commemorative Convocation

USM's Commemorative Convocation on 9 September was the highlight of the University's 40th anniversary celebration. It was held at the Engineering Campus in Nibong Tebal, a first for such an event to take place away from its main campus.

The Chancellor, His Royal Highness Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail, conferred the Honorary Doctor of Laws on His Royal Highness Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah of Kedah. In 1972, as the country's fifth Yang di-Pertuan Agong, the Sultan presented USM with the university mace, its symbol of academic authority.

The Honorary Doctor of Education was conferred on Tun Abdullah Haji Ahmad Badawi who served as Malaysia's fifth Prime Minister from 2003 - 2009. During his tenure, Tun Abdullah gave prominence to human capital development which led to the launching of the National Higher Education Strategic Plan. Arising from this initiative, USM was identified as the country's first APEX University in September 2008.

Also honoured was *Sasterawan Negara* (National Laureate) Professor Muhammad Haji Salleh with Emeritus Professor.



An exhibition to highlight research was also held in conjunction with the Convocation



Tun Abdullah receiving his Doctorate from the Chancellor

Speeches were translated into sign language throughout the ceremony



The Chancellor (foreground), the Sultan of Kedah and Tun Abdullah signing the plaques to mark the special occasion



Emeritus Professor Muhammad Haji Salleh



Five out of thirty-five of the pioneering alumni were present



VC waiting for the procession to begin

Congratulatory Messages

In conjunction with the 40th anniversary of USM's founding, messages of goodwill and souvenir gifts were received in August/September from more than 40 overseas institutions of higher learning. These institutions represent the growing list of universities with which USM has fruitful collaborative programmes and student exchanges over the years.



Hi-Tea

A Hi-Tea-cum- Apex University Discourse was held in conjunction with the 'Eid at the Kelab Golf Perkhidmatan Awam (Civil Service Golf Club) at Bukit Kiara, Kuala Lumpur on 10 October. The event was jointly organised by the Wilayah Persekutuan and Selangor USM Alumni chapter, attended by some 150 members. AUSM and CIMB jointly launched the Direct Access Platinum credit card together. The Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni also took the opportunity to promote *Balikampus*.



Accolades for USM at PECIPTA '09

Three coveted gold awards were bagged by USM staff for their innovative research at the International Exposition of Research and Inventions of Institutions of Higher Learning 2009 (PECIPTA '09) held in Kuala Lumpur on 8-10 October. The Universiti also triumphed in the Best Pavillion Design based on the sustainability theme inspired by a lecturer in the School of Housing, Building and Planning.



Active Pioneers

Ho Kam Chon (B. Sc. '72) and Lee Lee Ying (B. Sc. '72) belonged to the original group of 39 who graduated during USM's first convocation ceremony in June 1972. Kam Chon and Lee Ying (Mrs. Ho Kam Chon) made a comeback to campus on 22 October to interact with staff of Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni and outlined plans to organise a get-together of the class of '72 in Pulau Pinang, tentatively set for 12 June 2010.



Chandra Addresses Harvard

Prof Dr Chandra Muzaffar, a political scientist and the Noordin Sopiee Professor of Global Studies at USM, was invited to deliver a lecture themed 'A World in Crisis: The Relevance of Spiritual-Moral Principles' at Harvard University's Divinity School on 1 October. The lecture was organised by the Centre for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) under the 'Ecologies of Human Flourishing' series.



Photograph by Pat Westwater-Jong
(Source: <http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/resources/lectures/muzaffar3.html>)



A Time for Celebration

Joy and celebration go hand in hand with the end of Ramadhan, the Muslim fasting month. University staff of all levels and from various schools and departments mingled with top management at the USM 'Eid Open House held on 29 September in front of the Chancellory building. In the customary spirit of the celebration, staff members were exchanging festive greetings with each other whilst making a beeline for the stalls serving popular hawker fare.

USM Petronas Alumni

Representatives from Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA) met up with 20 USM alumni in Kertih, Terengganu on 18 August. The PPPA group was on a roadshow to promote *Balikampus '09*. The alumni members headed by Tengku Nazri Tengku Muda were all attached to Petronas, the national oil corporation. Apart from interest in the roadshow, these members also expressed enthusiasm in the setting-up of a USM Petronas alumni community.



Festival of Nations

The AIESEC (an international youth organisation that engages in student exchange and internship programmes) in USM jointly organised the Festival of Nations (Global Village) with USM Institute of Postgraduate Studies (IPS) and the Postgraduate Student Association at the main campus on 17 October. Students from different countries set up booths showcasing their culture, food and traditional games in the eight-hour event. There were also traditional dance performances by the participants of respective countries.



Text by Saw Cheang Kee, Sharifah Darweena, Yong Check Yoon and Yusuf Suid.
Photographs by Mohamed Talhah Idrus and Yong Check Yoon.



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