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THE **LEADER**

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PEOPLE
matter



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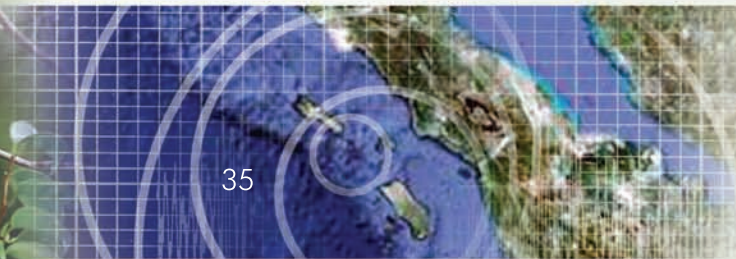
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Professor Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak is the Vice-Chancellor of USM and a columnist in the New Sunday Times.



Mohammed Khalid-Taib is a retired lecturer.

From The Chief Editor

Well aware of the romantic notion that the university is an 'ivory tower', modern universities have diverted themselves towards engaging the public in many of their endeavours.

USM, specifically, have been reaching out to ordinary citizens in a variety of projects besides working closely with government and corporate institutions. To date, the Vice-Chancellor has been emphasising on the 'bottom billion' and how concerted efforts in research and education are to benefit specifically this group.

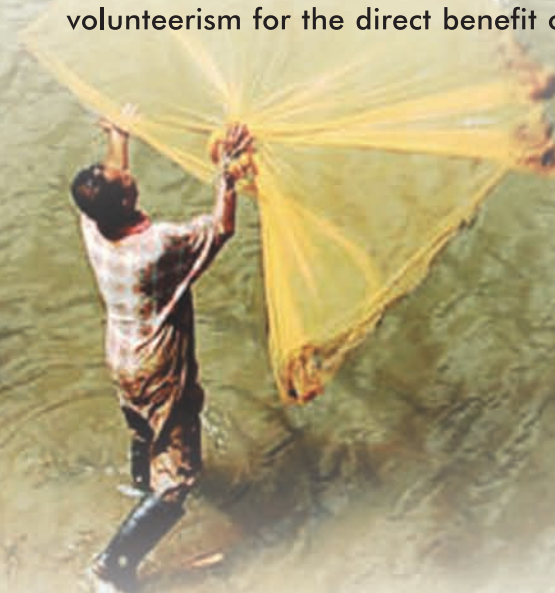
While the phrase 'bottom billion' may be quite recent, the efforts to reach the common citizen by the university community has been going on for some time. Many academics who have always been aware that the university's purpose is to serve the people have channelled their research and volunteerism for the direct benefit of this bottom pyramid. Some of their work have been showcased in previous issues of *The Leader*.

It is with this sense of indebtedness that this issue is dedicated to the people, for they matter, as well as the USM community who is reaching out to them in creative ways.



Photograph by Yong Cheek Yoon

Photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus



Chief Editor
 Mohamed Talhah Idrus
 B. Soc. Sc. '74



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1. Sharifah Munirah Syed Mohamed
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11. Rusli Jamaluddin 12. Alec Chin B. Comm. '92

THE ACCELERATED PROGRAMME FOR EXCELLENCE (APEX) AGENDA IS ON COURSE AND IT IS PICKING UP MOMENTUM BUT USM CAN EXPECT GREAT CHALLENGES AS WELL, SAID VICE-CHANCELLOR, PROF TAN SRI DZULKIFLI ABDUL RAZAK.

"WE CANNOT POSTPONE THE AGENDA BECAUSE OF THE CHALLENGES," HE DECLARED AT THE VICE-CHANCELLOR'S ANNUAL ADDRESS HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY AT DEWAN BUDAYA.



Artwork by Alec Chin

PEOPLE MATTER

*Dzulkipli Abdul Razak
B. Pharmacy '76*

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

In his speech that outlined the agenda, its achievements and challenges, Dzulkipli also highlighted six key areas that USM has achieved over the past year.

⇒ USM is the first in the world to decode the two-billion base rubber tree genome. Essentially a genome is the entirety of an organism's hereditary information encoded in chemical (deoxyribonucleic acid, better known as DNA). To decode it is like discovering what is precisely written on your computer programme to make it work the way it does.

With this wealth of genetic information, Malaysia can become the biggest producer of rubber by developing a high quality breed of rubber tree with resistance to diseases such as South American Leaf Blight and white root.

Research on oil palm genome is being undertaken in collaboration with Sime Darby over the next 15 to 20 years. This involves DNA modification of the oil palm genome to produce higher fruit bunch, compared to the current national average fruit bunch yield approx 20 tons per hectare. Currently research is still being conducted in the laboratory.



An orang asli house in Cameron Highlands, Pahang

⇒ According to the Out-of-Africa hypothesis, it was originally thought that the ancestors of modern man migrated out of Africa some one million years ago, and again, by our own species, *Homo sapiens*, about 100,000 years ago. However, this hypothesis was confounded when fossils of early man dated 1.7 to 1.8 million years ago were only found in Georgia, a country north of Turkey and Armenia.

Last year, the discovery of a 1.83 million year-old stone axe found at Bukit Bunuh in Perak by USM archaeologists has raised serious questions about the hypothesis of early human migration from Africa. Their discovery may spawn the Out-of-Asia hypothesis on the course of human evolution.

⇒ A think-tank called the Centre for Global Sustainability Studies (CGSS) was established to address pressing global problems. It is envisaged that as an international centre, it will bring together international expertise and knowledge from within the country and USM. CGSS shares USM's guiding principles for sustainable development in "producing global citizens with the capacity to address the pressing sustainability challenges facing humankind, in particular the 'bottom billions'".



*USM archaeologists working at a pit
(Photograph by Fairus Md Isa)*



Fruit stalls at the night market, Wakaf Che Yeh, Kelantan



Shanty houses in Pulau Gaya, Sabah

People Matter

⇒ A biotechnology company Holista-Colltech and USM will be collaborating to make Malaysia a halal Collagen Hub. The collaboration is vital if Malaysia is to become a key player in the international collagen market, in particular enabling Malaysia to emerge as a pioneer in developing a halal collagen hub in the world.

Among its many uses, collagen is to produce dietary supplements to improved quality of skin and finger nails. It is also used for the construction of artificial skin substitutes in burns surgery.

⇒ In USM's electronic industry roadmap, it struck an international collaboration with Indian Institute of Technology in Kanpur (IIT-Kanpur) and several other global partners that will be involved in developing a project to assist electronics companies move up the value chain. This project is expected to be based in Pulau Pinang. IIT-Kanpur has been recognised as one of the seven premier institutes of technology in India. It was established by the Indian government as a centre for higher training, research and development in science, engineering and technology.

USM is now working with the national motorcycle maker Modenas and Petronas Research in producing a hybrid/electric motorcycles, targeted for commercialisation by next year, and with DRB-HICOM Berhad to produce its own hybrid car by 2012.

⇒ To bridge the communication gap between research organisations and industries, USM established IXC Malaysia Berhad which is part of the International Innovation Xchange comprising non-profit IXC Australia and IXC United Kingdom. IXC serves as a world-wide, secure, managed environment for the exchange of insights, ideas and opportunities between firms, universities and research institutes. IXC Malaysia serves as a platform for knowledge and innovation exchange at the international network level.

Over the past year USM had made new grounds to reach the 'bottom billions'. It demands a change in mindset which otherwise prevents us from reaching the Blue Ocean. The most elating statement given by the APEX Audit Committee chairperson recently was, "You have not disappointed us!" But as we gaze ahead, there is still a long winding journey ahead. 🏠

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



A Malaysian car modified for fuel efficiency by USM students



Searching for shellfish in Bayan Bay, Pulau Pinang



Housing in the interior of Pahang



A young fishmonger in Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

What Say We...

You guys are doing a fantastic job producing those interesting articles and more importantly, keeping in touch with people who have been associated with USM in various ways. Syabas and keep up the excellent work!

Choo Hooi Sin
B. Sc. '73

There are many unrelated pictures in *The Leader*. Most of the stories are related to the senior alumni lacking coverage on the recent graduates. Maybe the editorial board should create job resource column to benefit recent alumni.

Mohd Raziff Razlan Nawi
B. Sc. (HBP) '06

The graphics are great. Is it possible to introduce articles in Bahasa Malaysia so that our children can read the magazine as well?

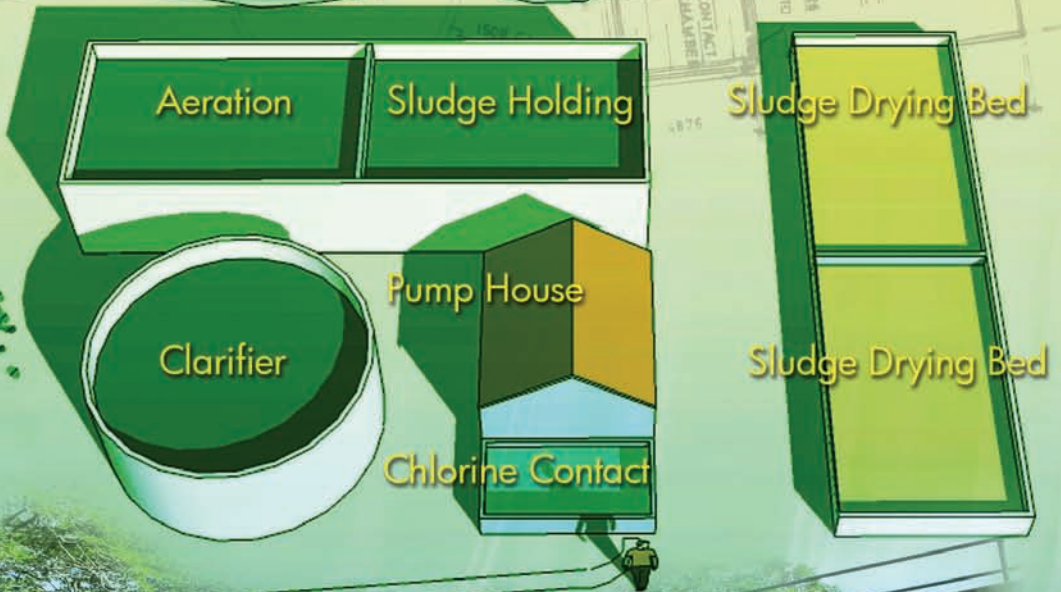
Abdul Talib Saad
B. Sc. (HBP) '84

I really believe that *The Leader* magazine has been publishing in a very stylish and educational way. I have been observing this for quite sometime and I think that we can do better towards the sustainability cause. As *The Leader* promotes conservation and preservation of the other residents, nature and heritages, I believe we can deliver a more prominent message by reducing the paper weight and use non-glossy paper. Although *The Leader* is a free magazine, I am confident to say that we can make it better by optimizing the resources that we have.

Muhammad Fitri Nor Isahak
Third Year
School of Physics

RAISING SNAKE CREEK

Text and photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin



Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin



The sewage treatment plant that discharge quality water as resources for the wetland life



Brahminy Kite, also known as *Lang Merah*, stealthily glided in circles, watching over the puny stream - its hunting ground - while waterfowls lurked in the tall grass, avoiding attention from the raptor. Fly-catchers, kingfishers and swallows also frequented this 'backwater' of Minden that juxtaposed with the sprawling Durian Valley. This secluded enclave, nestling on the north-western fringes of Minden, offers insects, frogs and fish as part of the food chain.

Contributing to this green soggy landscape is an unexpected presence of a sewage treatment plant that has formed an enduring partnership through a fortuitous quirk of nature. The wetland has been continuously fed with water streaming from the outlet pipe of the treatment plant. For the treatment plant, it is like an oversized can of preserves but of an unsavoury kind, stashing away capricious secrets that it processes.

The simple white-washed treatment plant could have been nicknamed 'Minden battleship' because of its size and its appearance like an engine room. Its menacing or ominously threatening appearance makes it an unlikely candidate to symbolise 'biological warfare' of a malodorous kind. However, once inside the building, one can see the nasty-looking gunk filling its tubby concrete chambers and muddy splotches can virtually be seen 'blooming' on their walls. Although it may be nauseous even to look at, and sometimes odious to the nose, the 'battleship' provides a veritable feast for the ever-present bacteria.



USM engineers dubbed this concrete chamber as the 'tank that washes itself'

Raising Snake Creek

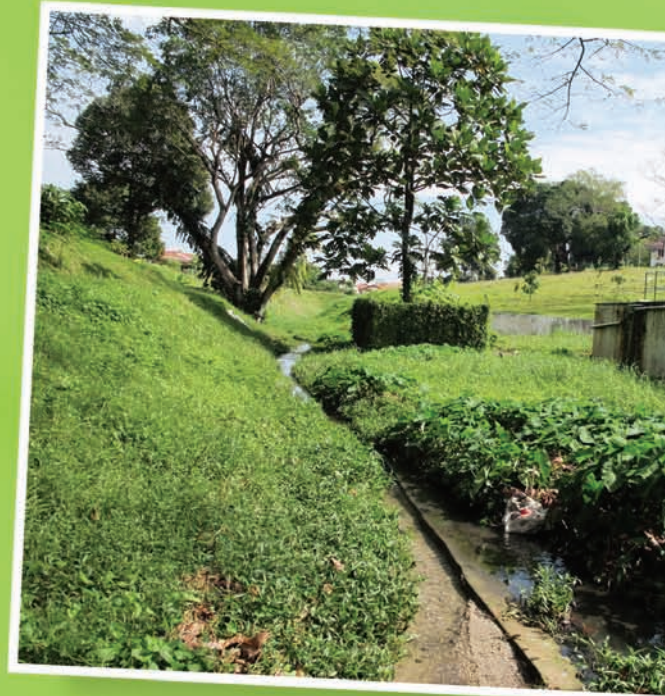
The treatment plant has become so much a part of our life that we often take its existence for granted. Few would ponder on the important role of the company of engineers and inspectors who are responsible for the maintenance of the 'battleship' in tiptop condition, ensuring that it would not disrupt nature's delicate balance.

"Generally people shy away from the topic as examining sewage is not everyone's cup of tea," said Waste Water Engineer Ir Nik Fuad Nik Ablah.

"Those tubby tanks over there," he added, "are septic tanks containing anaerobic bacteria. These microbes absorb toxic substances and digest suspended solid matter. The outflow at this stage, once chlorinated is discharged safely."

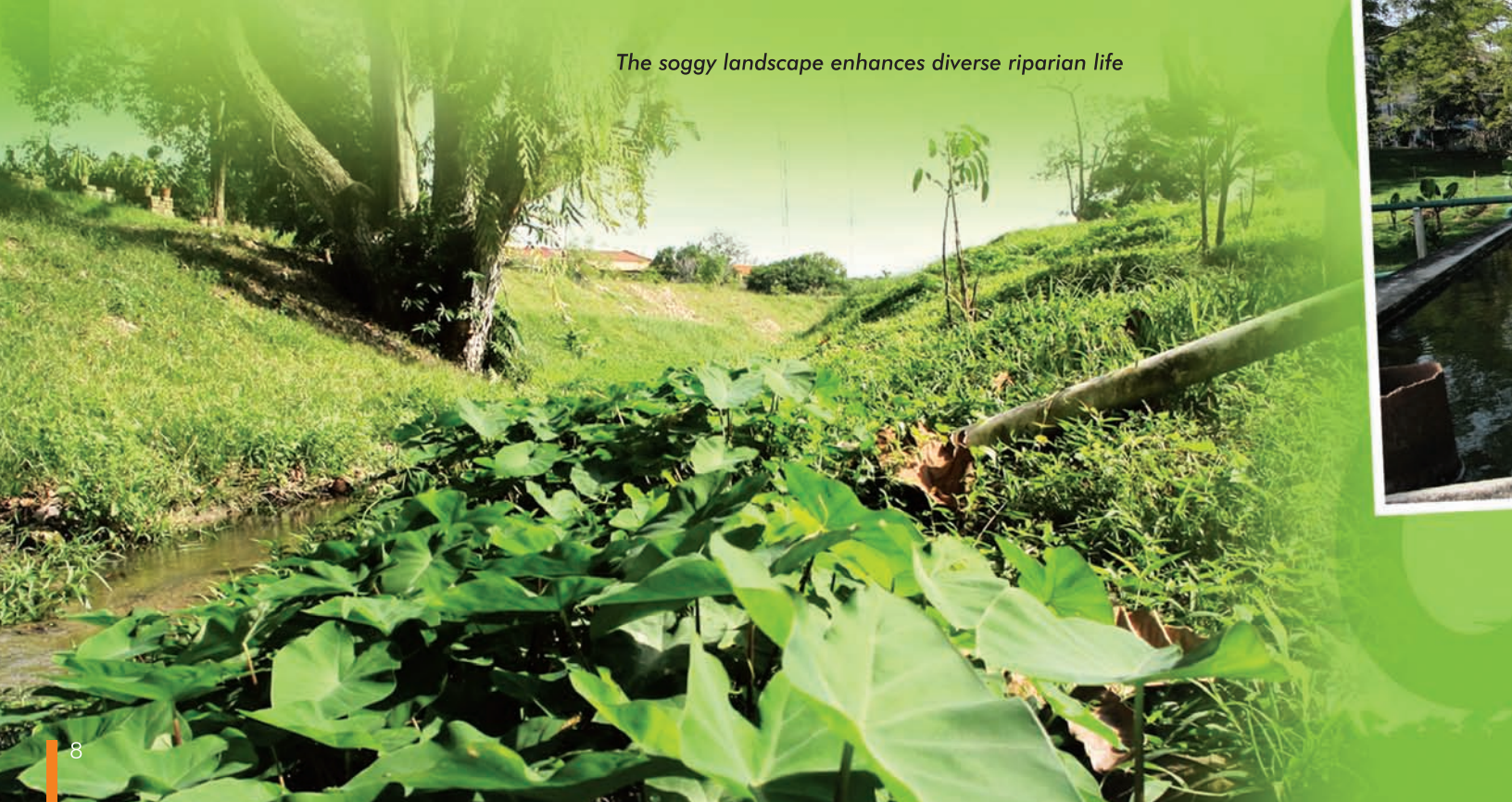
"The released effluent is then filtered by the roots of aquatic plants growing downstream. This partially treated water is nutrient rich and clean enough to nourish plants like *kangkung* (Water Morning Glory) and *keladi* (yam)," he added.

Here lies a surprise awaiting seekers of the unexpected - out of ugly cometh good! The treated effluent is the key to the enriched wetland that has made a significant contribution to the riparian life thriving downstream.



Keladi and other aquatic weeds have acquired a unique adaptation to the creek

The soggy landscape enhances diverse riparian life





Ruak ruak (white breasted waterhen) hunting for its elusive prey (Photograph by Hifni Baharuddin)



Aeration (background) and sludge holding tanks

The entire wetland is an inspiration to many but it has also gained the reputation as a place to be avoided as it was fearfully known as the 'snake creek'. It is because the thriving population of rodents and birds has also attracted snakes. Birds come to feed on the mosquitoes that make the open sewage tanks their breeding grounds. Nature aficionados and enthusiastic biologists claimed it as a 'perfect wilderness'. They believe the 'wilderness' should be preserved because of the variety of wild species existing there and also to recognise their right to live in an ecologically sensitive area with minimal human presence.

"I used to think that it is an undisturbed precinct," freshwater ecologist Hifni Baharuddin explained. "It has had diverse riparian life due to its natural settings and isolation from the rest of the campus."




A Malayan Night Heron wading through the shallows in search of frogs, snails and small fishes (Photograph by Hifni Baharuddin)



Entrapped sanitary pads inside the clarifier tank

To date, the precinct had been shaped by many realities: some intended, some by accident, and some are the byproducts of expediency. Make no mistake, we are all for 'progress' but progress has left its ugly marks... including sewer traps full of floating, bloated sanitary pads. In other words, we have to clean up our act (no pun intended), especially when there are special bins meant for their disposal. The trouble is that we often let continual developments destroy the quality of life by never knowing when to stop. The task is difficult but if we all work together, it is not impossible. And it is a task which must not and cannot be delayed.

There is an anecdote that tells us of a man who rushed down to a river to fetch water to put out a fire in his kitchen. His neighbour ran to the well behind the man's house to fetch a bucket of water to douse the flames. The lesson here is that it does not matter where you obtain the water but use whatever is within your reach to achieve results. 'Snake Creek' is seeking protection and proper care within our own garden without having to look beyond the fence. 

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

TRAILER

Reunion Dinner, 1972-74

Graduates and lecturers of 1972 to 1974 will meet for a reunion dinner on 12 June at 7.30 pm at Cititel Hotel, Jalan Penang, Pulau Pinang. Prior to that, at 6 pm there will be a cocktail. For details, call K. Asairinachan at 012-6079288 or Peter Ho at 019-2217902.

Permai's Reunion

'Sua Kembali Teman Permai' is a reunion for students who stayed at Desasiswa Permai from 1991 to 2000. It will be held from 11 to 13 June at Minden Campus. For details, call Mazidah at 013-4289195.

Premier League Soccer

USM fraternity can watch its home team playing in the Premier League on its own turf in a series of games.

USM FC Matches for March to June 2010

Date	Time	Team	Venue
12 March	8.15 pm	Sabah	Stadium Likas, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah
16 March	8.45 pm	Sarawak	USM Stadium
16 April	8.45 pm	Kuantan Port	Stadium Darulmakmur, Kuantan, Pahang
19 April	8.45 pm	Melaka	Stadium Hang Tuah, Melaka
23 April	8.45 pm	Melaka	USM Stadium
3 May	8.45 pm	Pos Malaysia FC	Stadium Majlis Perbandaran Selayang, Selayang, Kuala Lumpur
7 May	8.45 pm	Royal Malaysian Police	USM Stadium
14 May	8.45 pm	Felda United FC	Soccer Stadium KL, Cheras, Kuala Lumpur
17 May	8.45 pm	PKNS Selangor	USM Stadium
21 May	8.45 pm	Harimau Muda (Under 21 Malaysian Squad)	Stadium Hang Tuah, Melaka
24 May	8.45 pm	Malaysian Arm Forces	USM Stadium
4 June	8.45 pm	Majlis Perbandaran Muar	Stadium Tan Sri Dato' Hj Hassan Yunos, Larkin, Johor

On All Accounts

Hamima Dona Mustafa
B. A. '73

Photographs courtesy of
Mawan Nooraini Ismail

Artwork by Alec Chin

When Mawan Nooraini and her two younger brothers were growing up, their father, Md Ismail, a cashier at the Penang City Council, instilled upon them the value of honesty and hard work. Penang-born Mawan remembers her father's words till this day - "If you have 10 cents in your pocket it is yours. If your friend has \$1.00 in his pocket it is his. Do not envy him. You work hard to earn your \$1.00."

These words were to guide her when she became the first female Bursar of Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in 1998. She took the helm from USM's second Bursar, Mustapha Halimi, when he opted for early retirement.

"It never crossed my mind that I would be Bursar one day. However, USM have shown its confidence in me throughout the 26 years," Mawan said.

Recalling how she came to join USM, Mawan, who retired as the third Bursar in March 2008, stated that it was her late mother, Wan Teh Haji Ahmad, who secured the application form from the Universiti and sent it to her upon hearing that USM was expanding. Mawan was then working in a bank in the capital city of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, 369 kilometers from Pulau Pinang. She had been there for a year.



In front of her first office in USM

"I was interviewed by the late Tan Sri Professor Hamzah Sendut and the then Senior Assistant Registrar, Zambri Mahmud. The sole employee in the bursary was Mr Cheah Hoong Tuck, the Bursar," Mawan reminisced. "I was one of three who joined him. The other two were Ooi Jit Choo and Kan Ah Lek. I was hired to work in the budget and planning section while Kan Ah Lek and Ooi Jit Choo were assigned to take care of the accounts."

On All Accounts

Continuing to recall those early days, Mawan added, "As we did not have our own means of transportation, we shared a *kereta sewa* (rented car) to get to the office."

Their first task, as directed by the Bursar, was to formulate the budget of March 1971 for the earliest Schools established at USM: Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Education.

"Sometimes, Jit Choo spent the night at my house if we had to work beyond office hours to meet a certain deadline," Mawan said.

"Working in the budget and planning section was a blessing because it enabled me to see the full picture. The advantage was you know what direction to follow later," she explained. "Furthermore, the section allowed for good interaction and networking with the government, heads of schools in the Universiti, which enabled us to defend the budget together."

In September 1982, taking advantage of a provision under the Harun Salary Scheme which allowed administrative staff to go for an attachment, she



From right: second Bursar Mustapha Halimi, Vice-Chancellor Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, Mawan and first Bursar Cheah Hoong Tuck at the annual dinner for former Bursary staff in 2003



Contributing to the poor in Vietnam via Ustazah Mariam Hindi

pursued a Master's degree in Public Finance in the United States of America. Her husband, Ahmad Fizri Abu Bakar, and their two children accompanied Mawan, at her own expense, during the one and a half years' study leave.

Mawan has served USM under the administration of all five Vice-Chancellors. During her term of service, she has helped formulate policies to initiate several funds, created and formalised management committees and initiated several funds for specific purposes, such as research. Besides that, she also played a major role in modernising the conventional financial system to one that was Islamic-based.

Besides being the Bursar, Mawan has also served as the President of the USM Women's Association. Her other contributions include the initiation of the practice of qurban (the ritual of animal sacrifice on the occasion of 'Eid ul Adha, a Muslim holy day) abroad. In 2003, together with several friends and a contact person,




At home with family and first grandchild in Minden Heights

On All Accounts

Ustazah (teacher) Mariam Hindi in Vietnam, three cows were offered for sacrifice and the meat was distributed to the Muslims in the neighbourhood. Following the success in Vietnam, the subsequent year, the meat of 19 cattle were distributed to the Muslims living in the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar, with the help of another local contact person.

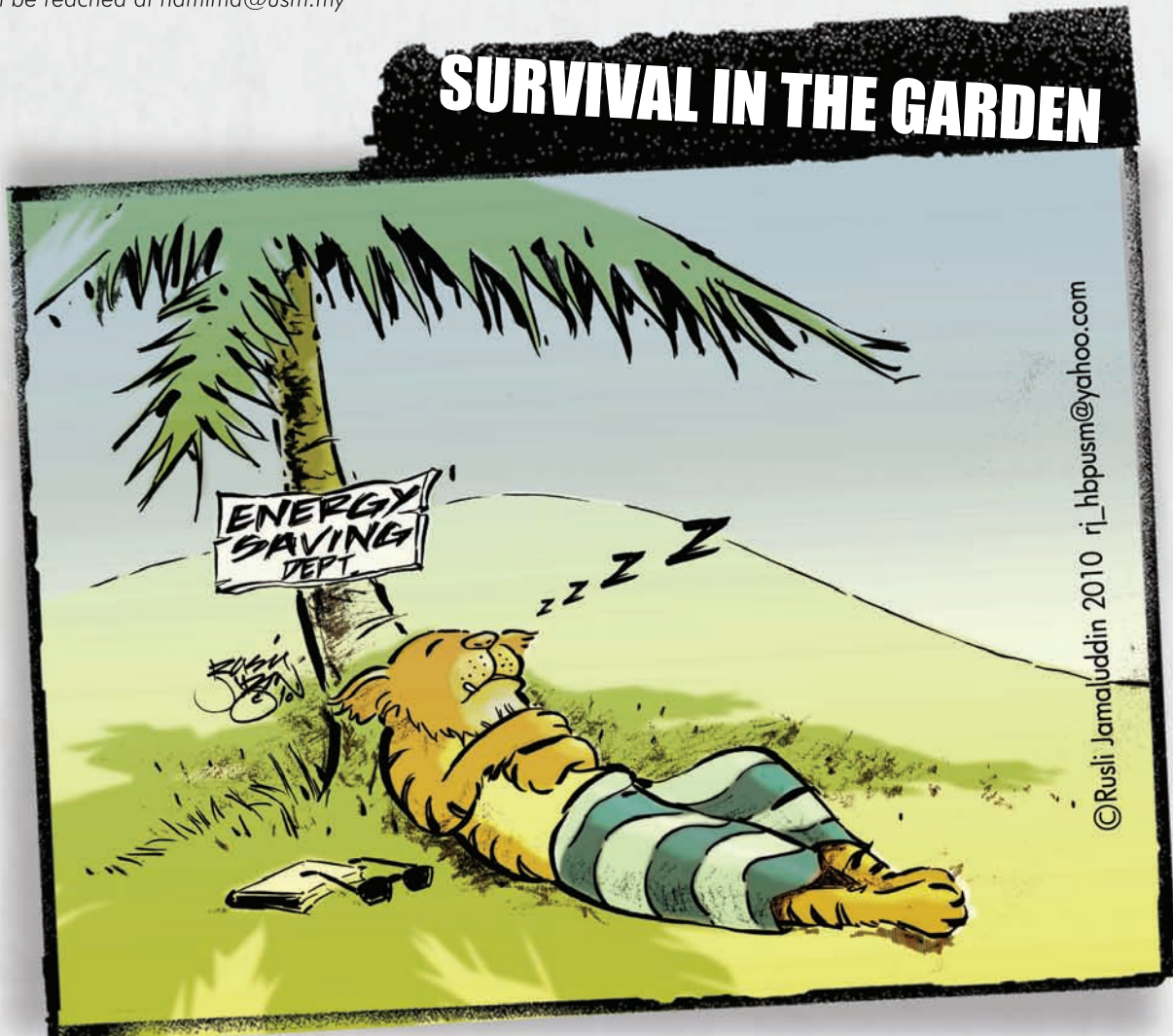
On the occasion to commemorate the Muslim new year of 1424 (March 2003), Mawan was awarded USM's *Tokoh Ma'al Hijrah* for the woman's category to honour those who have contributed to the community.

Mawan is presently with Sanggar Sains Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of the Universiti which was established in 2008 to help develop and manage the USM Science Park. She heads the Corporate Services Department, which is in charge of human resources and finance. 



Cattle sponsored by Mawan and friends for **qurban** in Vietnam

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





sea change

Yong Check Yoon Photographs courtesy of Ho Sinn Chye

Limnology is not a sociological study on the 'Lim' clan or lime that goes into your *limau ais tanpa gula* (iced lime juice without sugar). It is a branch of environmental study pertaining to all inland waters including lakes, ponds, rivers, springs, streams and wetlands. And it is this watery world that interests Prof Dato' Ho Sinn Chye since the early seventies when he did his postgraduate study on it. In fact ecology and environmental conservation are some of the relatively new words at least to this region because few countries could anticipate the possible threat to the aquatic environment.

One example is the introduction of plastic products in early 1970s. It is hardly conceivable that it will become a major pollution within a short span of about 30 years. Also, unmanaged water resources have caused the life-supporting resource to dwindle. This is where limnology plays its critical role.

Ho, or Dick as known to his friends, published a study on the impact of an oil spill (1974-1975) that affected the coastal resources of West Sabah. It was a significant study because such form of pollution was still not a concern for the public to rise in protest. Little is known to the public that oil pollution is one of the factors that kill the rich resources of the mangrove swamps - the mangrove trees, the aquatic life and the avian species - through asphyxiation and poisoning from the more volatile chemicals.

He attributed the foresight of the late Professor Hamzah Sendut (first Vice-Chancellor of USM in 1969) who introduced aquatic science as a discipline in USM.

"He recognised the fact that the whole Malaysia has a total of 4,675 km of coastline and it provides an abundance of opportunities to study and to understand the aquatic world," Ho said.

Over the years he has completed 16 major research projects and contributed to the publication of books ranging from the effects of crude oil on the aquatic environment to the characteristics and diversity of flora and fauna of Penang Hill. He has also contributed to numerous other journal publications.

Ho was with USM School of Biological Sciences from 1973 till 1997 when he was seconded to the Malaysian Wetlands Foundation as the director of Environmental Education and Research. It was a post that he held when he was invited as a Malaysia representative for the International Committee of the Societas Internationalis Limnologie (SIL) for the promotion of limnology in developing countries and SIL Wetland Working group. In 1983-84, Ho served as the co-ordinator for USM Biological Field Station at Muka Head (Pulau Pinang). He was also the Dean of the School of Biological Sciences from 1992 to 1998.

Such international appointments were a springboard to help promote water resource management and wetland conservation, particularly in developing countries where such subjects were still in their infancy and water conservation was not yet an issue.

In 1993, Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand recognised the joint potential of developing the infrastructure, natural resources and industries of these countries. Hence, they cooperated on a common platform known as the Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand-Growth Triangle (IMT-GT). Three regional universities - Prince of Songkla University, Universitas Sumatera Utara, and Universiti Sains Malaysia - were involved as consultants.

Ho recalled attending a IMT-GT biennial conference in Medan in 1995. Conferences such as these to facilitate discussions and experience sharing, IMT-GT has grown as it is intended. However, its success is hinged to the efforts of the group who believed in team work in making this region a better place.

He was seconded by USM to head the Malaysian Wetlands Foundation as the Director of Environmental Education and Research for a year in 1997 after which he was seconded again from USM to the Malaysian Ministry of Science, Technology and the Environment (MOSTE) which was later restructured to become Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) as the Director of the National Oceanography Directorate (NOD) from 2000 to 2006.

In November 2002, MOSTE Minister Dato' Seri Law Hieng Ding, MOSTE Secretary General Dato' Leong Ah Hin and Ho attended the Eighth Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP8) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands which was held in Valencia, Spain.



1. Ho (left) accompanying the former Parliamentary Secretary of MOSTE, Prof Dr Dato' Mohamad Ruddin Abdul Ghani (second left), at the Marine Science Exhibition, Kuala Lumpur (2005)

2. With former Minister of MOSTE, Law (second left)

3. On board the research vessel **Allied Commander** chartered by MOSTE during the ROSES Marine Expedition to the South China Sea (2004)


“We met with the Ramsar Secretary-General Delmar Blasco at his office,” Ho recalled. “At that meeting we discussed about wetland related issues and reaffirmed Malaysia’s commitment to efforts towards wetland education, management and conservation.”

The issues discussed during this meeting were those outlined in a document *Penang State on Regional Cooperation through Partnerships for the Wise use of Wetlands*, formulated during the Asian Wetland Symposium hosted by USM in August 2001. The 16-point document was reproduced in 19 languages and copies were distributed by Ramsar Centre Japan to participants during COP8.

“We may not be able to stop a tsunami in its path but we may have time to evacuate vulnerable populations to higher grounds.”

As the world is engrossed on wetlands and other environmental issues, a tsunami rippled from a quake in Indonesia and struck 11 countries, erasing coastal villages and brought death to tens of thousands on 26 December 2004. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries came together within a month of the disaster and made several proposals including the setting up of a Regional Tsunami Early Warning Centre on the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia. Ho was one of the seven Malaysian experts chosen to sit in the committee which he sat in the capacity of NOD Director. He has given numerous talks about tsunami which is the Japanese word for ‘harbour wave’.

“Such an early warning system will enable governmental agencies to evacuate vulnerable populations to higher grounds, therefore saving lives,” Ho said. “We may not be able to stop a tsunami in its path but we may have time to evacuate vulnerable populations to higher grounds.”

Despite the advancement in technology, we are, most of the time, not able to tame nature but only witness the calamity it wrought. However, it is scientists like Ho who help the ordinary people understand its occasional tantrums and rage to escape its wrath by living in harmony with the environment. 



With former Minister (MOSTE) Dato' Sri Dr. Jamaluddin Mohd Jarjis during the deployment of the second deep-sea tsunami early warning buoy offshore of Pulau Layang-Layang, South China Sea (2005)

DISABLING BACK

Yong Chek Yoon
Rusli Jamaluddin

Photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin

The writer accompanying Latif on his routine visits in George Town

Assoc Prof Dr Latif Kamaluddin describes himself in a book as an Indo-"Malay"-Hungarian WordArtist. Living out his simple philosophy in life, he takes public transport and mingles with the less understood segment of society. 'Unconventional' would be the most appropriate word to describe the lecturer at the School of Social Sciences since the seventies.

Latif's clean shaven pate belied a full luxuriant beard. When we met him at his office in USM, he was attired in a bright orange loose fitting cotton shirt and oversized trousers of a matching colour and wore numerous metal bangles around his wrists.

He was comfortable in his space, sitting on the floor among his piles of books which are mostly on religions and philosophy. Once, workmen attempted to refurbish his room but he told them to let everything be as the room has a life and character of its own.

"You will damage its fragile fabric of existence by renovating the place. You do not change them at your whims and fancies."

Equally at home in his USM office

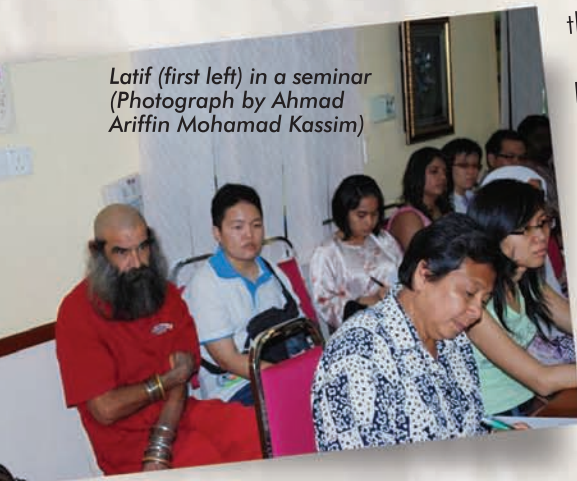
"Similarly this applies to our education system," he continued. "There is so much to understand about it and if there are changes to be made they have to be done sympathetically. We institutionalised education, straying away from the traditional form of education that we used to receive."

He explained that Muslim children in the days of yore attended religious classes which offered an "extremely valuable social function" where kids from different kampungs and social backgrounds got together to learn and to play in a very informal environment. They had the chance to explore and play anywhere they wanted as it was very safe then. They played with children from other ethnic groups as well. In the process, the world became their textbooks where they learnt the names of birds, trees and things around them.

"I wonder if the children now know what is buah keriang (a purplish fruit that looks like a grape)," Latif reflected. **"Education is a continuous process and it does not start or end in an academic institution. With the acceptance of the world being a school, you can learn valuable lessons from it but there would not be any paper credentials."**

Pausing for a moment, he continued, "Our present education system recognises the number of A's a person gets and this leads to a futile paper chase. We mistakenly believe that this is what education is all about. Students go to universities for a certain number of years, graduate and assume that they have reached the pinnacle of knowledge whereas in reality it is just only the beginning (of a lifelong process)."

Latif (first left) in a seminar
(Photograph by Ahmad
Ariffin Mohamad Kassim)



BAD BREATH
AND
FIREPROOF DRAG QUEENS
Otherwise
known as
KHEPA'S DILEMMA
Being
a
CONCRETOCEPTUAL CELEBRATION
of
IRRELEVANT RESEARCH

Cover of an unconventional
book written by Latif



The painting by Regina



A sex worker in one of the alleyways

Latif told us philosophically, "I'd like to propose an alternative scholastic approach where books don't talk, (but) only the mind and soul meditate." From his perspective, books just guide the user while the unbridled mind explore and probe the subject in depth.

Apart from teaching, Latif walks among the poor, the transsexuals, drug addicts, and the sex workers during his free time. He befriends and counsels them until he becomes a familiar face in the street or alleyway.

Strolling with him down Lebuw Chulia, one of the main thoroughfares laid down since the early days of Pulau Pinang, where there are hotels (some dilapidated-looking), we were informed that his friends could not come to meet us because enforcement officers have been raiding these places almost on a daily basis.

"These outcasts of society have been regularly harassed and treated like common criminals," Latif said. "Without proper education and vocational skills, they have no alternative but to remain in the trade to eke out a living."

Latif then pointed to a small sign on the door of a hotel which hints at the availability of rooms by the hour. He then moved on to speak about the dilemma of transsexuals in society.

"Transsexuals are perceived as outcasts," he said. "They are supposed to meet with society's expectation - either to be a man or a woman - and the price to pay for failing to do so is very grave."

According to Latif, many of these transsexuals are disowned by their family. They encounter problems in getting employed on the basis of their sexual identity and there is no legislation to prevent such discrimination. Often they are victimized at their workplace.

"Most transsexuals in Malaysia willingly go into prostitution because society treats them like social pariahs. With hardly any viable options for a decent career, it is hard for them to break out of the lifestyle once they got into it," he explained.

"There are few who escaped the cesspool of rejection and misery. It is time for people to change their mindset and accept transsexuals into society," Latif stressed.

Our tour ended in one of his favourite kopi tiams (coffeeshop). Latif showed us a painting on the wall by Regina, his god 'daughter'. He told us that she is one of the lucky few who managed to earn her keep with her artistic talent. 📌

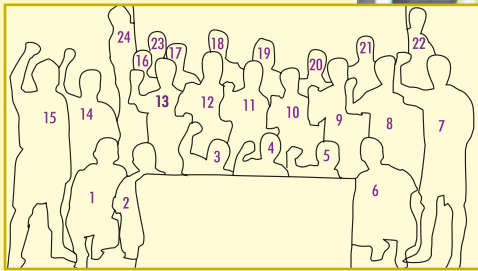
Yong Check Yoon is currently an editor in Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPA), USM. He can be reached at check_yoon@yahoo.com. Rusli Jamaluddin is currently a lecturer at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, USM. He can be reached at rj_hbpusm@yahoo.com



GOALS PUSH

Yong Chek Yoon
Photographs by
Fairus Md Isa

Nobody had expected this rookie team of USM Football Club (USM FC) team who works as non-academic staff in USM to shine in the game. Only their team manager Mohd Azizudin Mohd Shariff works as a Senior Assistant Registrar. Unperturbed, they continued to play for eight years out of passion for the sport, barely surviving on the generosity of friends and the campus community.



1.Mohd Noraslan Makhtar **2.**Mohd Hanafi Abdullah **3.**Mohd Baser Mahamad Napae **4.**Mohd Amirul Omar **5.**Zulhilme Mohd Fauzi **6.**Munir Mohamad **7.**Adam Abdul Malik **8.**Prakash Maruthiyen **9.**Muhammad Fauzan Zainal Abidin **10.**Mohd Hisham Jainuddin **11.**Zamri Zaidi **12.**Mohd Fahmi Mohd Yusoff **13.**Azizul Ahmad Sabri **14.**Ahmad Norafandy Mohd Yatim **15.**Zairi Jaafar **16.**Mubarak Kamal **17.**Muhammad Afzan Zainal Abidin **18.**Mohd Zakri Amin **19.**Mohd Solehin Mohd Rodzi **20.**Mohd Fakhrol Radzi Yaacob **21.**Rohaizad Mat Ali **22.**Thevandran Pitchay **23.**Muhammad Azizan Md Arshad **24.**Mohd Redzuan Nawi

“They would play the game until late evenings then come to work early in the morning,” said Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation Prof. Asma Ismail who is also their advisor. “They volunteered without expecting anything from USM.”

She then pointed out that their coach S. Veloo (who was former Penang chief coach) and his assistant coaches took their own leave when there is a need to train the team. None complained.

“I met 40 of them - football players and the entire management team - one evening at the Chancellory Conference Room (Bilik Persidangan Canselor) this year and they invited me to be their advisor,” Asma recalled. “They were in dire need of funding and having to face a myriad of other new problems being in the Premier League.”

Previously they can play on just any field but now they have to pay for the stadium, worry about ticket sale, obtain football jerseys determined by Football Association of Malaysia (FAM) (not just any tee-shirt sponsored by a good-hearted donor) and boots.



Club advisor
Asma Ismail

Goal Rush



USM players in black and white jersey

“We have to think beyond USM being an institution of higher learning.”

The spirited team has to play two games every week for the Premier League and to meet with the new challenges they need to be healthy to perform under pressure. Their being professional players do not provide an excuse to slack in their work because they are still staff of USM; they proved to be resilient in their work. Just as what Joseph P Kennedy (1888-1969) said, “When the going gets tough, the tough gets going.”

“I was moved because the spirit they showed towards USM and the fact that they had persevered for eight consecutive years on their own,” Asma said, adding that the Registrars, advisers, and the bursar were there.

She told *The Leader* that the players need to focus on their game and thus financial worries should be handled by a Chief Executive Officer and the management team.

For USM FC team manager Mohd Azizudin Mohd Sharif, his team would be facing five of the most experience teams on the field: the Harimau Muda (Under 21 Malaysian Squad), FELDA United, PKNS Selangor, Malaysian Armed Forces and the Royal Malaysian Police.

“The matches will draw the support of football fans, particularly those from the campus community to back our team throughout the games,” he said. “Majority

of the team members are our staff as we do not rely too much on imported players.”

To him, losing the game does not matter as much as not having tried to win. He trust his team in giving their best.

USM will play 12 matches at the USM Stadium and another 12 matches away from home territory until July. This will qualify it for a spot in the Premier League and FA Cup for the 2010 season.

Asma encourages staff and their family to attend the matches at USM stadium. Besides supporting the home team, they are able to treat it as a family outing. The price of each ticket is RM5; RM10 for grandstand seat; and she is contemplating about introducing year-round season ticket of RM120. The sale of season tickets can also help to provide cash in advance.

“We have to think beyond USM being an institution of higher learning,” she said. “It can excel in sports as well, just like many of the American universities.”

She explained that students do not only go to good universities. Given a choice, they would also like to choose one that excels in sports. USM is providing the choice. **■**

Yong Check Yoon is currently an editor in Pejabat Pemaajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), USM. He can be reached at check_yoon@yahoo.com

Rind That Binds

Jonathan Chen
B. Comm. '05

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus and Alec Chin



Azhar about to profile the molecular structure of the durian rind
(Photograph by Rusli Jamaluddin)

Prof Azhar Mat Easa is no stranger to the food technology industry. Having been in the business of researching about food products for nearly 15 years, it seems that he is just getting warmed up in his explorations to understand what works and what does not where food is concerned.

Currently the Deputy Dean at USM's School of Industrial Technology, Azhar has focused much of his research efforts on producing foods that function beyond normal foods.

Azhar is also known to be a fighter and to a certain extent, a rebel, when it comes to getting results in his research.

"Actually, if you want to be innovative, you need to be almost illegal," he claims, with a glint in his eye.

Rind That Binds

"You see, when it comes to food, the innovation is endless - there are numerous possibilities when it comes to experimenting with it," he explains.

The problem, according to Azhar, is that the food regulations in Malaysia tend to be slow and are unable to keep up with the pace of innovation in food technology.

"Whatever we can produce in two to three months time will most of the time come to a dead end in terms of commercialisation due to our food policies.

"But on hindsight, this represents a great opportunity for us to fight and to keep on fighting for what we want. For people like me, if you fight hard enough you can make a career out of it," Azhar jokes.

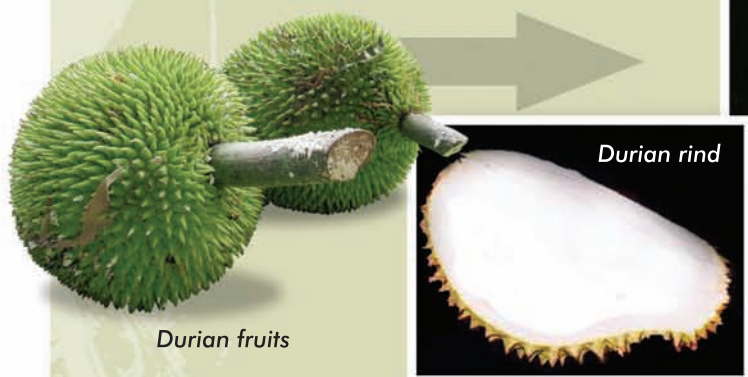
A little while ago, Azhar developed what is known as Modified Durian Rind Pectin, more commonly known as mDRP, which has the capability of absorbing heavy metals in the human body and excreting them via urine.

They eventually discovered that pectin could be extracted from durian rinds. Pectin, explains Azhar, is a gelling agent in jams and jellies. Further extensive testing led to the discovery that durian rind pectin could actually bind heavy metals to itself.

"Pectin is able to bind with heavy metals because it is a chelating agent. Our durian rind pectin is already capable of doing that, but through research we were able to modify it so that it can bind up to 50 per cent more heavy metals," he explains.

According to Azhar, heavy metals tend to accumulate in the body, especially in the "filtering" organs such as the liver and kidneys. There is already a similar product - Modified Citrus Pectin - on the market, but is more expensive than mDRP and is in fact banned in Malaysia.


Azhar is keen on exploring other venues in food technology.



"I was interested in the durian simply because it is the king of fruits," Azhar said, adding that durian rinds were most of the time just discarded as they were 'useless'.

He and his team of researchers, however, wanted to explore what could be made of durian rinds so that they could be turned into something of value.

"The best thing about food is that consumers' tastes keep on changing. Someone may one come up with a new colour, flavour or simply a different food product, but a few years down the road someone else will think of a better idea or innovation, simply to keep up with the changing tastes and preferences of the consumer.

"This means that the rate of invention and innovation must progress in tandem with these changing preferences and hopefully, we are the driving forces behind it," he said. 

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



Locals in different localities have given a variety of names to the Black-naped Oriole

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

THE Name Game Part 1

Selaput Tunggul
Cenokadak
Burung Kunyit
Kusabang Mak Miaah
Tok-keh
mergusua

♪ Like the singing bird and the croaking toad,
I got a name, I got a name. ♪

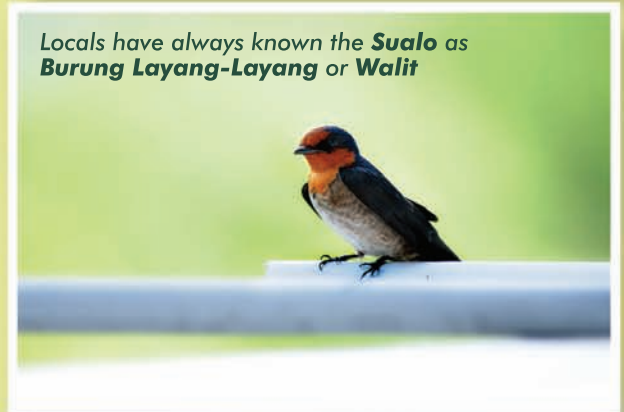
Jim Croce, I Got A Name (1973)

A single species usually goes by many names, as is the case with this **Sumpit-Sumpit**, a.k.a. **Pok-keh** and **Tok-keh** in other localities

Selapat Tunggul, Anggerik, Tok Tenun, Pok-keh, Layang-Layang are Malay names readily understood by kampong folks and senior citizens. Nowadays many locals including some of those studying these species will raise eyebrows at the strangeness of these words. They are slowly being replaced by more 'glamorous' ones. Mention the same species with *Seri Pagi*, *orkid*, *Cengkadak*, *Sumpit-Sumpit*, and *Sualo*, then will you hear exclamations of recognitions and sighs of reliefs.

Though the majority of species names are still in their original forms, one particular species is often known by different names in different parts of (even) West Malaysia. However, largely due to ignorance and shoddy research the names of some species have been blatantly translated without regard to the already existing names which have been commonly used for ages. Examples of some of these are the fish-tailed palm which has been translated as *palmaekorikan*, Morning Glory as *Seri Pagi*, Malayan Tiger as *Harimau Malaya*, and *Burung Ringgit* for the Dollarbird!

Despite the familiarity of the name **Tiong** or **Tiong Batu** for the Dollarbird, the ridiculous translation of **Burung Ringgit** has been observed in a few publications



The Other Residents

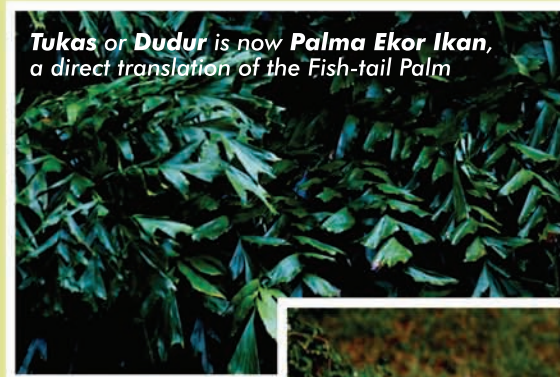
The Name Game

Their habitats too have not been spared from glamorism, as is the case with *kelebur*, *paya*, *lahar*, terms for various types of wetlands which are now reduced to only wetland! Even the word wildlife is now more commonly understood by its direct translation of *hidupan liar* than the original *mergastua*.

Some of the new terms like *wetland* and *sualo* are not even translations but merely words that went through a spelling change.

Others like *koel* for the same English 'equivalent' koel, is neither a translation nor a spell-change. It is exactly an English word forced onto the younger generation as a Malay word. Yet we complain about our children's inability to communicate with their seniors when some of us are being over-creative in forcing unnecessary words in their books.

For local flora and fauna, this extravaganza in translations are totally unnecessary, for it severs communication between the academics and the common men, between generations, as well as encouraging cultural confusion. It also curbs creativity in indigenous communication skills which contribute to the survival of cultures.



Tukas or **Dudur** is now **Palma Ekor Ikan**, a direct translation of the Fish-tail Palm



Selaput Tunggul, the original reference to Morning Glory has been translated as **Seri Pagi**



Due to the yellow powder on its body, some locals have ingeniously coined its name as **Kumbang Mak Minah** (Aunty Minah Beetle)

Paya and **lahar** are more recognisable words than **wetland**, for the locals have co-existed harmoniously with them, modifying some into padi fields with little ecological disruption



Without a translation a koel has been **Burung Tu-Wu**, or **Tu-Hu**



The **Kaka** is one of the many New Zealand species which has retained its local name

Some countries notably New Zealand and Australia, and to a lesser extent The United States are reverting to popularising local names than their English equivalent. Maori and aboriginal names like the kiwi fruit, *manuka* (honey), *tui*, *kea*, *kaka*, kangaroo, *barramundi* (white bass elsewhere), *Uluhuru* and *billabong* have been successfully globalised.



The **Tui** bird is popular in branding some New Zealand products

In the efforts towards sustainability, we definitely need to rewrite our sustainable education strategies, Culture need to be defended and promoted. Anglicised Malay words should not be confined to negatives like *amoks* and *bomohs*. More local terminologies, especially those associated with biodiversity should penetrate the English dictionary.

♪ And I carry it with me and I sing it loud;
If it gets me nowhere, I'll go there proud. ♪

Jim Croce



With its local identity the kangaroo has succeeded in being (arguably) the most recognisable national icon



AHMAD ZUHARDI
SHAFAI



ASTUTY AMRIN



JAAFAR MATASIN



MALEK SELAMAT



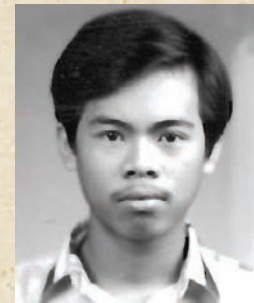
MOHD SULUTAN ALI



SHAMSUDIN ALI



TENGGU ASMADI
TENGGU MOHAMAD



TONY LIM KEAN LEE



VICTOR TAN PANG HAU



YAP KIM HON



ZAKARIA ABDUL RASID



ZULKERNAIN NORDIN



ZULKIFLY ALIAS

Haslina Haroon Photographs by Mohamed Talhah Idrus
B. Soc. Sc. '74

REDEEMING THE Kaduk



Redeeming the **Kaduk**

*The **kaduk** has, for a long time, been a seriously neglected plant and suffers from poor image. The Malay sayings **Seperti kaduk naik junjung** and **Seperti kaduk kena air tahi** have probably contributed to tarnishing the image of the creeper. It is often relegated to a side dish, and it is perhaps only in the **nasi ulam** that the **kaduk** becomes important, and even then only as one of the many ingredients used in the Malay delicacy. The name also lives in one of the most popular characters in Malay folktales, the village simpleton known as **Pak Kaduk**. While it may be difficult for the **kaduk** to achieve the status already acquired by its more glorified cousins, the **sirih** (betel leaf), the **lada hitam** (black pepper) and the **kaduk** certainly deserves far more respect than it currently gets.*

The pioneering work of Prof Zhari Ismail and his team may perhaps see us scrambling to the nearest *kaduk* plant, especially if one is keen on fighting the flab. When Zhari first joined the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, USM, he was extremely interested in studying local resources and their uses in the pharmaceutical industry. This interest was partly nurtured by the fact that his own grandmother was a well-known *bidan* (midwife) in Kuala Pilah who had extensive knowledge on local plants and their medicinal value and in the preparation of traditional herbal remedies. In spite of the extensive use of herbal plants in traditional healing, Zhari realised that not many of the plants have been studied systematically. He stresses the importance of documenting the medicinal potential and benefits of local plants in a manner acceptable to the scientific community if we are serious about promoting our local resources.



*Two other cousins of the **kaduk**, the **lada hitam** (black pepper) and **sirih** (betel leaf), have proven their pharmaceutical worths*

Zhari's work can perhaps go some way in changing how we view the *kaduk*. Also known as wild betel, wild pepper and pointed pepper, the *kaduk* is not totally unknown in the medical world. It is traditionally used to relieve coughs and fever and other minor ailments such as toothache and stomach ache. Having a similar shape as the *sirih*, the *kaduk* is often mistaken as its more popular relative, although it is much softer to the touch when compared to the *sirih*.

*A **kaduk** patch amidst other medicinal plants in the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences*

Redeeming the **Kaduk**

Zhari initially studied the *Tongkat Ali*. He then went on to *misai kucing* and later progressed to *kaduk*. Through his extensive research which started in 2005, Zhari has been able to show that the *kaduk* is especially effective in curbing obesity. According to Zhari, extracts from the *kaduk* have been proven to help inhibit the formation of blood vessels in fatty tissues, thus depriving the fatty tissues of nutrients. This also means that less fatty tissues are formed and this in turn reduces the buildup of fat in the body. Together with his team, Zhari came up with a *kaduk*-based product called Nobesiti. While stressing that the product is not a cure for obesity, it should however be able to help in curbing the problem.



Zhari in his office, with samples of the **kaduk** product in the foreground (left)



Dried **kaduk** fruits (right) and stalks before processing for research



The processed **kaduk** leaves



Finished product in tablet form

Unfortunately, however, the product is not currently available in the market. Citing a tedious patenting process as a major hindrance, Zhari is nonetheless keen on getting the product in the market, especially considering the benefits that can be offered by a plant

that seems to thrive without much care and which has long been overlooked and unappreciated. The work of Zhari can perhaps help in bestowing upon the long unappreciated *kaduk* the respect it truly deserves. ▮

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

Artwork by Alec Chin

P.M.

A.M.

VI

XII

BANDA ACHEH

SIMUELOE

NIAS

Healing a Province

Zulkifli Osman

Photographs courtesy of
Abu Hassan Abu Bakar

Five years ago, on the morning of 26 December 2004, a strong earthquake originating in the Indian Ocean just north of Simeulu Island, off the western coast of Sumatra, and measuring 9.2 on the Richter scale, jolted the northern part of Sumatra. Minutes later, the most destructive tsunami in history, struck the Province of Aceh at the northern tip of Sumatra, killing some 200,000 lives and sweeping everything in its wake, destroying billions of dollars worth of properties. The power of the tsunami rippled across the world, killing thousands more in Thailand, Sri Lanka, India, the Maldives, Africa and many other countries, including Malaysia.

The news shocked the world and aid poured in from everywhere, in billions of dollars for emergency relief, redevelopment and reconstruction. While people were busy assessing the damages and mobilising volunteers into the affected areas, another strong earthquake measuring 8.4 on the Richter scale, hit the West Coast of Sumatra again on 28 March 2005, killing nearly 8,000 lives and destroying almost 90 per cent of the island called Nias.

This vast devastation in Aceh Province and throughout Nias Island further compounded the misery of survivors who had lost family members and their means of livelihood. The rapid response of the international community provided immediate relief in the form of goods, services and funds for long-term infrastructure reconstruction works targeting priority sectors such as health and education. Part of these reconstruction



An existing school in Kacamatan Lolofitumoi that needs urgent attention

funds were made available to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which undertook the major responsibility for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of schools in Aceh Province and Nias Island.

One and a half years after the destructive tsunami, Assoc Prof Dr Abu Hassan Abu Bakar from the School of Housing, Building and Planning joined the International United Nations Volunteer (IUNV), participating in the redevelopment and reconstruction programme in Aceh and Nias Island. He was attached as an IUNV to the United Nations Office for Project and Services (UNOPS), the implementing partner for the United Nations Fund for Children (UNICEF) for the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of School Project in Aceh and Nias Island for the duration of 6 months of his sabbatical leave. As a construction manager for the Nias field office, in Nias Island, West of Sumatra, he was responsible for managing the construction of 53 *sekolah dasar* (primary schools) that were flattened by the 2004/05 earthquake and tsunami.



Abu Hassan (left) supervising site preparation in Sisobahili Tabaloho Dahan, Nias Island



Conducting soil test before the reconstruction of a school

Healing a Province

According to Abu Hassan, the six-month sabbatical was very fruitful as he had gained a lot of knowledge and experience, both in the management of a United Nations agency like UNOPS and also technically. The exposure at management level has given him inside information on the management of UNOPS at many different levels. The communication system adopted was mostly electronic where, besides the telephone, the use of emails was deployed at all levels of communication. This was because the conventional system of communication would hamper the speed of implementation between the regional office in Bangkok, the Project Management Unit in Bandar Aceh and the field offices in Meulabuh, Calang and Nias Island. Any delay in decision making would affect the progress of work at each field office and with an electronic system of communication, the level of efficiency and effectiveness would increase. The expenditure in the organization is tightly controlled by procedures proven to be effective against misuses. Any expenditure has to be declared, accounted for and approved by the superior.

The availability of construction materials was another concern. Steel reinforcements and some key materials had to be brought in from Medan or Jakarta and this contributed to the escalating cost of construction. Some of the materials were available but the quality was inappropriate.

One of the roads leading to Gunung Sitoli town from Sisobahili Tabaloho Dahan, Nias Island



Site preparation for a school in Sisobahili Tabaloho Dahan, Nias Island

A project of this nature was not only very demanding in terms of technical capability but also in managing the logistics of the projects as the schools were located throughout the Island. The infrastructure was very poor, the roads narrow and poorly maintained. For instance, it would take you four hours to reach your destination 60 km away. Telecommunications had been damaged by the earthquake, electricity frequently disrupted, water supply limited and its pressure was low.

Abu Hassan observed that culturally the people of Nias are different from Malaysians. He reiterated that understanding their culture was a challenge. They speak their own language called Nias which is unique and totally different from the national Indonesian language. He said that when working with them at the field level you need to know their language and this forces you to learn certain terms that are frequently used in the field. Generally the people in Nias have a low literacy level so training and capacity building in construction was an uphill battle. Nevertheless, the people are hard working and very enthusiastic about learning new things which made the task of knowledge transfer less difficult.

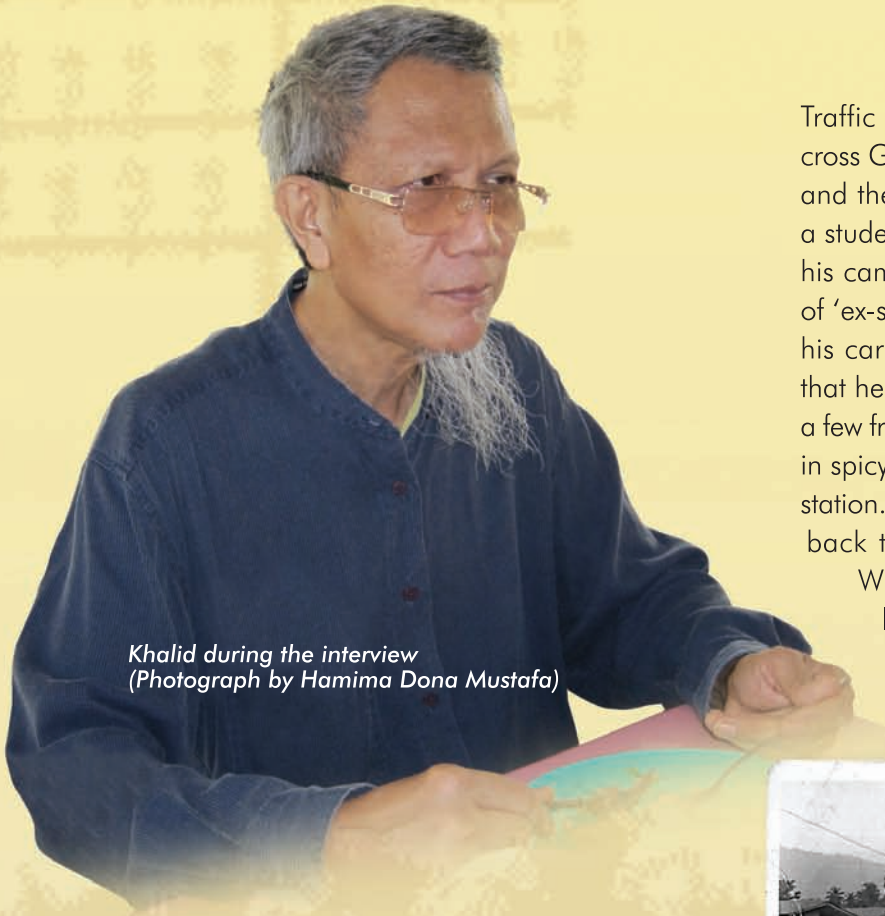
Overall, Abu Hassan concluded that the six-month sabbatical in Nias Island with UNOPS under the Reconstruction and Rehabilitation of School Project was not only very fulfilling personally but was also a very successful endeavour in helping the Nias people rebuild their lives. 🏡

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin

QUIET ROADS, NOISY STUDENTS

Mohammed Khalid-Taib

The first time I came to USM was for a teaching-job interview in March 1970. Its temporary campus was in the premises of the Malayan Teachers' College (MTC) Pulau Pinang, straddling the hillock known as Bukit Coombe, Gelugor.



*Khalid during the interview
(Photograph by Hamima Dona Mustafa)*

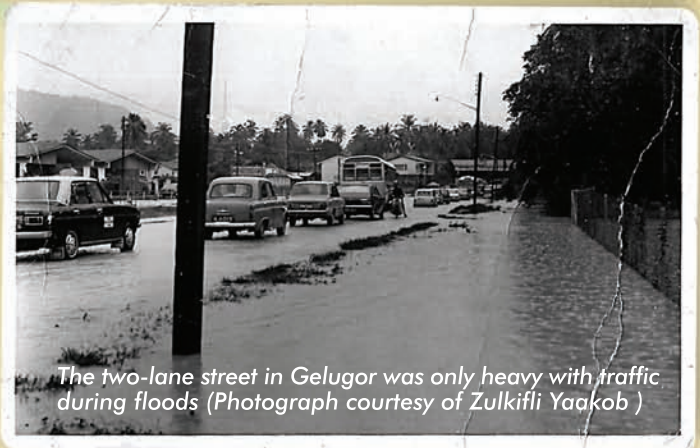
Like everyone else, I took the ferry, then the only link between mainland and the island. Many freshies (first year students) who did the same, in June 1970, would tell you how perplexed they were when they could not see any ferry bearing the name 'Pulau Pinang' although there were 'Pulau Talang-talang', 'Pulau Kapas', 'Pulau Undan', to name a few. They were unaware that all those ferries have a common destination, i. e., Pulau Pinang.

With the new academic session of 1971, I began my career as an assistant lecturer in the newly-established School of Cultural and Community Studies (presently known as the School of Humanities). Our 'offices' were rooms in a few rented houses across the road from the MTC, the neighborhood which provided accommodation for many of the students as well.

One memorable incident involved a lecturer who was inadvertently locked in by his other colleagues one night when he was working very late in his 'office'. The old main-door lock could only be opened by one particular key!

Traffic was so sparse then that one could leisurely cross Gelugor Road to the MTC for lectures, tutorials, and the periodic School Board meetings. One day, a student, affectionately known as Papa Zain among his campus friends and who belonged to the group of 'ex-school-teachers on half-pay study leave' drove his car to the MTC for his classes. Later, forgetting that he had driven there, he crossed the road to join a few friends at the then famous Penang *laksa* (noodles in spicy fish-based soup) stall, next to the Shell petrol station. After the chit-chat session, he leisurely walked back to his shared dwelling place in the vicinity.

When he could not locate his car in front of his lodgings he frantically reported to the security office that his car had been 'stolen'.



The two-lane street in Gelugor was only heavy with traffic during floods (Photograph courtesy of Zulkifli Yaakob)

From their early days, the School of Cultural and Community Studies and the School of Social Sciences had strong 'comparative' curricula, with a variety of major fields of study. English was the medium of instruction then. The academic staff members were multi-ethnic, a mix of local and foreign expatriates. A good number of courses were taught by senior academics from the University of Malaya (UM), referred to as 'flying lecturers', who used to fly in a day before their classes, and fly back to Kuala Lumpur (KL) the day after. Pulau Pinang was especially attractive then for KL residents. Being a 'free-port' it offered duty-free imported goods sold in shops along Campbell Street and Bishop Street - a 'bonus' for those 'flying lecturers'.

By the end of 1970, there were indications that the university was getting its permanent campus. Thanks to the foresight of our first Vice-Chancellor, the late Tan Sri Prof Hamzah Sendut, the designated larger acreage in the Sungai Ara area was 'exchanged' with the then military enclave of Minden. The pleasantly undulating terrain with clusters of immediately-usable buildings and its beautiful greenery became an instant hit with the students and staff of the university. From then on, the end-of-term always climaxed in student-staff get-togethers. One such party was held at the 'old poolside' next to the Red House.

The earliest group of us young Malaysian lecturers, then in our mid-to-late twenties, was a minority. The senior lecturers 'on loan' from the University of Malaya and the non-Malaysian contract lecturers outnumbered us with the ratio of 3:7. Most of us joined the university as guru at the Centre for Languages and Translation or as assistant lecturers at the Schools. All of us were simultaneously working on our respective Master's degrees. Only those with Master's or PhD degrees in hand were appointed as lecturers. However, regardless of our entry-point academic qualifications or the Schools we were based in, there was then a strong sense of camaraderie and esprit de corps and we 'wore the badge' of 'USM lecturer' with pride and joy. We worked for the development and common good of the institution.

People outside the University generally called us Cikgu (teacher), which was clear in its inherent 'job description', compared to a PhD holder's 'Dr' which was often mistaken for the medical 'Dr'. We, the junior teaching staff members and ex-teachers who had 'rickety' used cars together with the few young-adults who could afford motorbikes, very often met at a strategic 'motor-

repair place.' Located under a huge cherry tree with lean-to tarpaulins for roofing, directly opposite the main entrance to Minden Heights, this place was where we (men folk) shared information about used cars. Hence a 'bond' between students and the male junior staff was established.



A mechanic repairing one of the students' motorcycle (Photograph courtesy of Zulkifli Yaakob)

In those early 1970s, classes were so comfortably small that the teaching staff, even the expatriates, knew most of the students well. The first few groups of Humanities students were very interesting. They were all highly motivated, strong-spirited and eager to acquire new knowledge. Three personalities among the young adults Hamima Dona Mustafa, Mansor Ahmad Saman, and Ariffin Omar, stood out for always, 'raising questions in class' and keeping this retiree 'on his toes'.

The mass enthusiasm of these young adults even rubbed off onto the minority of 'former school teachers' who proudly referred to themselves as mahasisua (old undergraduates) as a tongue-in-cheek variant of mahasiswa (undergraduates). In any case, the majority of young adult students always referred to the mahasisua in the most 'formal' and respectful manner, such as using the prefix 'Cik (short for Encik or the Malay language version of 'Mr') or Pak denoting respect for an older person. Hence, one was known as Pak Man and another as 'Cik Zain or Papa Zain).

By 1977, when I rejoined the School of Humanities after a four-year PhD-stint in the U.S.A. three of those early graduates had also joined the staff ranks of the School of Humanities, made possible through USM academic staff-training schemes. Several new schools had been established. The student population had increased by leaps and bounds and staff-student relationship had generally become more formal. ▮

A PRICED DECONGESTANT



Yong Chek Yoon

Photographs by Rusli Jamaluddin

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin

A Pricey Decongestant

The Jelutong Expressway (JE), hugging the Pulau Pinang eastern foreshore from the harbour area to the Penang Bridge interchange, was identified as a traffic 'antihistamine' to help decongest the roads as the number of cars choking them worsened. The coastal road stretches until Batu Maung and helped usher in a new era that promotes car ownership when the first Proton Saga made its debut in 1985. It was our 'national pride'.

According to Ganesh Rasagam, the author of a comprehensive study on sustainable transport in Pulau Pinang, the ownership of cars and motorcycles in Pulau Pinang increased to 752,438 in 1995. Thence, the emphasis on public transportation was sidelined and this led to the decline of public transport services.

Traffic condition on the island turned from bad to worse, especially when travelling from the mainland via the Penang Bridge is so convenient. In 1997, the Pulau Pinang State Government privatised the construction of the expressway to a company by providing a concession to develop 137 hectares of land in exchange for the 4.7km JE.

In Phase One, the 3.1 km stretch of JE from Jalan Bakau to Penang Bridge was opened to the public in 2003, a few months short of four years since its construction began. Phase Two, linking Jalan Sungai Pinang to Weld Quay, was opened in February 2008. Under Phase Three, the expressway would be upgraded from two to three lanes with interchanges at Jalan Tan Sri Teh Ewe Lim and Jalan Sungai Pinang.

Taking a leisurely drive along JE offers a scenic view of the South Channel even with the Jelutong dumpsite marring a section of the stretch. You can hardly see the 800 tonnes of garbage that had been deposited there daily in the mound as it is covered with earth. In July 2001, the dumpsite was closed down after nine years of operation and is then limited to bulk and green waste disposal only. A private contractor then oversees its daily waste compaction and soil cover operation. It was once a popular fishing spot because the dumpsite juts into the sea but now the place is out of bounds.



Commercial activities occupy the landward side of part of the expressway

The coastal side of the expressway overlooking the Penang Bridge

A Pricey Decongestant

An elevated view of the six-lane expressway near Gelugor



New housing development has sprung up along the expressway



Two of the statues beside the pedestrian walkway



Shellfish collectors against the backdrop of land reclamation

Close by, there is a shack by the shore that displays a simple signboard: *Ani Nasi Campur Gulai Sembilang*. Despite being such a humble place, its *ikan sembilang* (catfish) curry attracts Penangites who are gifted with a nose that can sniff out good food.

Along the way you can see new housing schemes ranging from low-cost to high-end units and an integrated industrial park. There are also houses costing up to RM1.2 million and also in the plans is the 131-hectare project which includes a waterfront city and a promenade. As you head towards the Penang Bridge, you will drive pass a row of oversized metallic grey seagulls and you cannot miss the statues of a couple of runners that were erected in conjunction with the International Marathon 2009.

As the eastern coastal swath was preparing for the 'birth' of JE, there were dramatic changes to the lives of many who had been in the area for generations. It was some time in 2008 when 70 fishermen were moved from Sungai Gelugor to Lebu Bakau about 5 kilometres away and their catch dropped by about half. There was a traditional shipyard in Jelutong where I interviewed the owner in perhaps early 2000s. He told me grimly that he has to move his business out of Jelutong. At that point in time, he was not too sure if the business would be in Batu Maung or Pulau Jerejak. Along with traditional businesses, old *kampungs* in the area perished, replaced by modern high-rises. In time to come, the shape of this part of Pulau Pinang will change drastically with land reclamation and siltation. That is the compromise we need to make to reduce traveling time to the inner city and also bring about needed housing development to the land scarce island. 🏠

@ Anjung Budi

Welcoming theSun

theSun made its debut at Anjung Budi on 14 December 2009. Copies of the free newspaper became available for distribution to Universiti staff and visitors at Anjung Budi, compliments of Sun Media Corporation Sdn Bhd.

Avid readers of *theSun* can get their favourite newspaper from 8.30 in the morning at the Anjung Budi hallway Mondays to Fridays (public holidays excepted).



First Garage Sale

The crowd had been streaming in since the opening hour on 22 January at the garage sale, the first major event in Anjung Budi's 2010 calendar of activities. There were eight stalls peddling their wares ranging from soft toys to herbal/health products as well as household decorative items, used apparel, cakes and even photography packages for weddings and other special occasions. Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA) stall raised RM 271 for an orphanage.

The event is another example of continuing efforts made by PPPA towards popularising Anjung Budi as the 'in' place for the campus community to converge and savour the many interesting programmes being planned throughout the year.





Qi-gong Classes

In line with promoting healthy lifestyle, PPPA invited Dr Ong Ming Thong from the Institute for Research in Molecular Medicine (INFORMM) to conduct qi-gong classes at Anjung Budi on Tuesdays beginning 5 January.

A fee of RM5 is charged for each one-hour session that starts from 5.30 p.m.

Ong introduces various forms of qi-gong such as the popular Eight-Piece Brocade, Bagua and Tai Chi.

Arab Fare

Patrons at Anjung Budi can now sample Arab food at the stall operated by Noor Dina Biran and her husband Yazan Abdel Aziz. The stall offers a range of savoury dishes - *syawarma* (Arab kebab), Arab *Biryani* (rice cooked with spices, rice and meat, fish, eggs or vegetables), *ma'loba*, *hummus* and *falafel*.



Appetizing Treats

Nino's Garden Café, operated by Natrah Dato' Md Nazir (a.k.a. Nino), occupies a cosy corner within Anjung Budi hall since 3 February. The café offers a rare opportunity to customers a well deserved treat of scrumptious cookies, delectable pies and pastries, authentic American breakfast, and a selection of fine teas. Nino also accepts orders for functions and occasions.



Parking Woes

The tussle for parking space is becoming acute. With the narrow roads in USM that are not meant for heavy traffic volume, it has led to vehicle owners parking haphazardly in every available space at the inconvenience of others. Jalan Ilmu where Anjung Budi is located is not spared from traffic monitoring to regulate the flow. The immediate remedial measure is to beef up traffic policing in the worst affected areas.



Komtar Walk outlet at night



Cendol Station

from stall to chain

Yong Check Yoon

Zulkifli Osman

Photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin and
Yusuf Suid
B. Comp. Sc. '06

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin



The original stall at Lebuh Keng Kwee

Cendol Station: From Stall to Chain

On a hot day there is nothing better than having a bowl of ice cold *cendol*. Ask the group of our alumni who had their bowl of *cendol* by the roadside at Lebu Keng Kwee during last year's Balikampus and they will tell you that it is indeed one of the best that they have ever tasted. The secret, according to 52 year-old Tan Chong Kim, lies in the green *cendol* noodles that his family prepares from rice flour and the brown sugar syrup that is used to top the heap of shaved ice.



Cendol



Teik Fuan at his original stall

Chong Kim's father, Teik Fuan, started the business from a wooden pushcart parked beside Joo Hooi coffee shop which fronts Jalan Penang. Even today *cendol* is still sold from a pushcart, only that it is now made from gleaming stainless steel.

"In the olden days my father had to shave a block of ice on a simple wooden contraption fitted with a sharp blade," Chong Kim said. "Later, we

acquired the hand operated ice shaver which was part of the technology of the day and we used that for some years before changing to an electrical model when it was available in the market."

He revealed that it was quite labour intensive to prepare the green *cendol* noodles, its coconut milk base and a syrup mixture prepared from brown sugar and *gula melaka* (palm sugar). Preparing these is much easier now with the help of machines. Apart from selling *cendol*, Chong Kim also sells other drinks, including the popular pegaga herb juice at Lebu Keng Kwee.

As business grew, he branched out his Penang Road Famous Teochew Cendol to four other places: Komtar (fronting Jalan Lim Chwee Leong), Sunshine Farlim, Giant hypermarket food court in Bayan Baru, and a shoplot in Prangin Mall. He set up a branch in November 2009, located at Komtar Walk and named it Kafe Penang Road Famous Teochew Cendol.

The outlet introduced *laksa* (rice noodles in spicy fish-based soup), *nasi lemak*, yam cake, spring roll, egg tart, yam puff and curry puff into the menu at its Komtar branch. For drinks it included carbonated drinks, floats, and *ice-kacang* (a mixture of *cendol*, cream of corn, kidney beans, jelly, and other ingredients with shaved ice and syrup topping).



Chong Kim with Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng at the Komtar Walk outlet

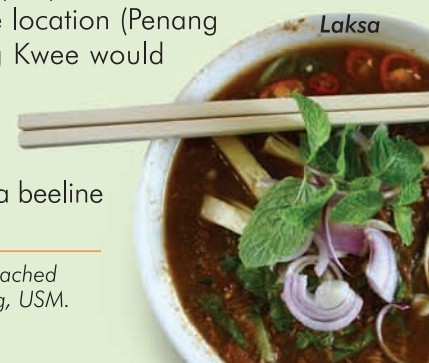


The cosy interior

Chong Kim's eldest son Chin Ling, 28, is the only in the family who is helping out with the thriving business. His other children are successful professionals.

"We've been about 70 years in the business, and here (at Komtar) we operate from 11 am to 10 pm throughout the week," he said. "On weekends we might extend a little past 10 because the crowd is usually larger."

This tiny corner in the entire Komtar footprint is seen as a potential to attract foodies, yuppies and the crowd. Chong Kim has been able to enjoy brisk business because, even without having a proper name for the nondescript pushcart, people have associated the product (*cendol*) with the location (Penang Road, although Lebu Keng Kwee would be more precise). Therefore, it explains why his *cendol* chain has such a long name and regulars are still making a beeline to the outlets. **L**



Laksa

A Perfect Gift

Yong Check Yoon

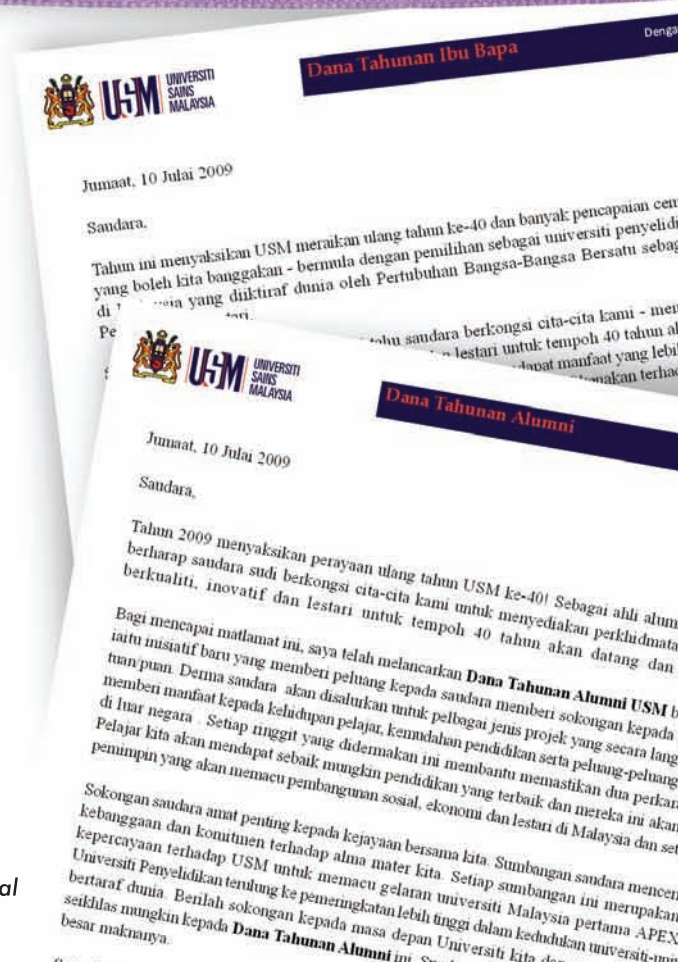
*"Give a man a fish; you would have fed him for today.
Teach a man to fish; and you would have fed him for a lifetime"*
- Author unknown

On that note, the gift of education is a gift of a lifetime.

It is probably for the first time that a public university launched a phonathon programme, calling up alumni and parents of current students to help raise funds through pledges for the *Dana Tahunan USM* (USM Annual Fund). Launched in July 2009, it undertook the phonathon as one of the methods to solicit pledges. In response to its success, Vice-Chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dzulkfli Abdul Razak replied spontaneously that "we will acquire a van to shuttle the physically challenged students".

This USM Annual Fund was launched with 25,000 letters of appeal being sent to university staff, parents of current students and alumni and it helped raise RM72,155. This was followed up by the phonathon programme that was supported and sponsored by Pusat Racun Negara (PRN) call centre.

Letters of appeal



A Perfect Gift

"We have a team of 10 dedicated staff trained to operate the battery of telephones located at the call centre," call centre advisor Prof Rahmat Awang explained. "From November to December (2009), we conducted phonathon for Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA) because we have the infrastructure and experience to do it."

The result of the phonathon was encouraging with alumni responding positively to the phone calls.


"When the phonathon concluded, call centre had made close to 2,500 calls and with only 113 unsuccessful attempts," call centre manager Ahmad Shalihin Mohd Samin remarked.

The effort was paying off as the respondents were telling how much they appreciate the call and even suggested how they could contribute to the Annual Fund in cash or kind.

"It surprised all of us when most of the alumni who were busy when we called, were gracious to return our call," said Dr Asha Suresh Chand, PPPA Development Manager. "We managed to raise RM60,608 in pledges from phonathon and this shows the generosity of our alumni and parents to their alma mater."

PPPA director Assoc Prof Mohamed Talhah Idrus said that students are going to benefit from the donations and thanked the donors for their kind thoughts.

"Every ringgit counts and it is certainly going to help needy students and the whole USM community," he said.

Through this Annual Fund, USM is offering the less privileged an equal opportunity to prove their worth. If they manage to succeed then they would be able to contribute to the less fortunate in terms of knowledge and service to help make the world a better place. 

Calling potential donors at the call centre



Signed and delivered...

The van that Dzulkipli promised was delivered to USM on 3 February. Wheelchair-bound student Ku Li Huang was invited to test the hydraulic ramp of the van after the inking of the Memorandum of Understanding between USM and Malaysian Institute of Road Safety Research (MIROS).

Yong Check Yoon is currently an editor in Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), USM. He can be reached at check_yoon@yahoo.com



Education Malaysia Dinner in Hatyai

Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA) represented USM at the *Education Malaysia Dinner Programme* themed *Coming Together, Growing Together* at the Novotel Hatyai Centara in Hatyai, South Thailand on 23 December 2009. The function was hosted jointly by the Malaysian Ministry of Higher Education and Malaysian Education Promotion Centre in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC). It was attended by the Malaysian Consul General in Songkhla, director of Malaysia Education Promotion Centre in HCMC, and 160 representatives from various institutes of higher learning in Malaysia and Thailand.

Tribute to Vice-Chancellor's Leadership

The Vice-Chancellor, Prof Tan Sri Dzulkipli Abdul Razak, was conferred the National Higher Education Leadership Award by the Asian Academy of Management (AAM) in conjunction with the opening of the 8th AAM International Conference at a leading resort hotel in Kuantan, Pahang on 18 December 2009. The conference was jointly organised by AAM, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Malaysia Pahang with the support of the Pahang state government and attended by 200 delegates from within the country and overseas.

At the event, Dzulkipli also received his appointment from the Prime Minister as Co-Chairman (representing the government sector) of the Malaysian Industry-Government Group for High Technology.



Season for Premier Action

USM Football Club (USM FC) is the first public higher education institution football team to qualify for the Premier League. The USM FC played its first Premier League match against Pos Malaysia FC on 11 January at the USM Stadium. It is also for the first time that USM and its stadium to host Premier League football. Six of the 12 games will be played at the USM Stadium until July.

Reigniting the Glory of Open Relay

USM became the country's first institution of higher learning to re-introduce 'First USM Open Relay' after a lapse of 20 years. The tournament organised by the USM Athletics Club and the Penang Amateur Athletic Association was participated by more than 400 athletes nationwide on 23 January.



USM Eco Hub Student Design Exhibition

The USM Eco Hub Durian Valley: Design Exhibition and Presentation was launched on 19 January. Third year architecture students from the School of Housing, Building and Planning participated in the project to design the Eco Hub. The building will incorporate a space for ecological experts to work in, a resource centre and for related activities to be carried out.



Global Higher Education Forum 2009 (GHEF 2009)

GHEF 2009 was held from 13-16 December 2009 at a leading beach resort in Pulau Pinang organised by the National Higher Education Research Institute, USM. The conference with its focus on exploring South-South collaboration was themed Current Trends, Future Perspectives.

It was officiated by Dato' Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin, Minister of Higher Education, Malaysia and attended by over 200 participants from Malaysia and 31 other countries. Altogether 25 papers were presented and topics ranged from current trends to the future perspectives of higher education with the present global economic downturn as the main backdrop. It discussed the possible consequences and alternate avenues for mitigating the global financial and economic effects, particularly for countries of the South.

Roughing It Out

Forty administrative officers from three USM campuses gathered at Royal Belum Rainforest in Perak, for leadership training organised by USM's Training Unit from 11 to 13 December 2010. The participants later visited three Orang Asli villages and distributed food items and chatted with the villagers.

(Photograph courtesy of Syahnaz Riza Sukor)



Winning Minds

In a collaborative venture with the European Union (EU)-Support Network, a team of researchers from the School of Educational Studies, led by Assoc Prof Dr Sharifah Norhaidah Syed Idros coordinated a project which engaged school children to share ideas on climate change. Students from SMK Serdang won joint second-place with SMK St George, while SMK Bukit Jambul was placed in the Highly Commendable project category. They have been funded to attend the EU-Support Youth Conference in Netherlands in February, and an International Conference in April in Norway to receive their award and to present their projects. The Sultan of Kedah has awarded the students of SMK Serdang the Anugerah Bintang Semangat Jerai on 18 February 2010.

*Text by Saw Cheang Kee, Sharifah Darweena, Yong Check Yoon and Yusuf Suid.
Photographs by Yong Check Yoon, Fairus Md Isa and Mohd Aidilfitri Mohd Nor Saidi.*



Asairinachan Kunjamboo
B. Sc. '72
Managing Director,
Waste Stream Management
Sdn Bhd,
Kuala Lumpur



**Tengku Maziedah
Khaulah Tengku Ahmad**
B. A. '73
Managing Director,
DTI Jaya Sdn Bhd,
Selangor



Tan Kok Hin
B. Sc. '73
Managing Director,
SB Consultancy Sdn Bhd,
Pulau Pinang



**Tuan Ibrahim
Tengku Abdullah**
B. A. '73
Managing Director,
Lawand Tourism and
Travel Sdn Bhd,
Kuala Lumpur



**Ahmad Ghazali
Md Kassim**
B. Soc. Sc. '75
Executive Chairman,
AGK Capital Partners Sdn Bhd,
Kuala Lumpur



**Dr Muhammad Ikmal
Mohd Said**
B. Soc. Sc. '76
Director,
Yayasan Khazanah,
Kuala Lumpur



Francis Lee Yoke Chueng
B. Ed. '91
Crown Manager,
Elken Sdn Bhd,
Pulau Pinang



**Mohd Zulkifli
Abdul Rahman**
B. Eng. (Civil) '93
Manager,
Wego Sdn Bhd,
Kuala Lumpur



Mazidah Hashim
B. A. (Edu) '95
Teacher,
Sek Men Keb Bukit Gambir,
Pulau Pinang



Zulkarnain Abd Karim
B. Comp. Sc. '98
Researcher,
Institute for Health Systems
Research,
Kuala Lumpur



Angeline Joseph
B. Eng. '99
Associate Product Manager,
Glaxo Smith Kline,
Selangor



Syarul Edwan Jaafar
B. Tech. '01
Executive,
Evergreen Fibreboard JB
Sdn Bhd,
Johor



Raznim Arni Abd Razak
B. App. Sc. '03
Research Officer,
Malaysian Palm Oil Board,
Selangor



Abdul Aziz Man
B. Mgmt. '04
Head of Special Asset,
Maybank Bhd,
Pulau Pinang



Mohd Hazlie Muhamad
B. Comp. Sc. '04
Teacher,
Sek Keb Long Kesseh,
Sarawak



Bhuvanesh Abhinesh Rajamony
M. Sc. '05
Research Associate,
School of Engineering and
Applied Science,
State Univ of New York,
New York



Rasimah Ramli
B. Acc. '05
Assistant Manager,
TH Plantations Berhad,
Kuala Lumpur



Ade Muhammad Arbi
B. Comp. Sc. '05
IT Infrastructure Division,
PT Bakrie Telecom,
Indonesia



Syed Zahid Hassan
M. Sc. '05
Senior Business Data Analyst,
British Airways Authority,
UK



Mariah Ibrahim
M. A. (Edu) '06
Head of English Unit,
Institut Perguruan Persekutuan
Pulau Pinang,
Pulau Pinang



Rohaya Baharum @ Harun
B. Soc. Sc. '07
Assistant Registrar,
Univ Pertahanan Nasional
Malaysia,
Kuala Lumpur



Norasni Mamat
B. A. '08
Administrative Assistant,
Ministry of Natural Resources and
Environment Malaysia,
Putrajaya



Mohd Redhuan Mohd Noor
B. Health Sc. '08
Science Officer,
Faculty of Agrotechnology and
Food Science,
Univ Malaysia Terengganu,
Terengganu



Nur Farahiyah Mhd Taib
B. Comm. '09
Assistant Secretary,
Corporate Communication
Division,
Ministry of Home Affairs,
Putrajaya



USM officers spared some time during a training programme in December 2009 to reach out to three Orang Asli (aborigine) villages, distributing food items and chatting with the villagers at the Royal Belum rainforest in Perak (Photographs by Nor Rafizah Md Zain and Syahnaz Riza Sukor)