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Community
Engagement



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SPECIAL FEATURE

- 2 Down From the Lofty Tower
- 6 Coming into Being

@ANJUNG BUDI

PERSONALITY

- 9 REACH-ing out... building Hope

MINDEN MEMORIES

- 12 The Realm of the Estate

WHAT SAY WE...

SUSTAINING HERITAGE

- 18 The Soldiers' Field

GIVING BACK

- 23 Rising Against Adversity

THE PIONEERS

- 24 Management 1988

CAMPUS LIFE

- 26 Culinary Garden
- 28 Sirih Pulang ke Gagang 2010

THE OTHER RESIDENTS

- 30 Lifelong Service



WONDERBUG

- 35 5D4N Beijing Muslim Tours

BRIDGING IDEAS

- 36 Poor No More
- 40 The Art of Science Learning
- 42 Credit on Trust
- 44 Banished Dreams
- 46 Linking with Communities
- 48 Building Critical Mass

BEYOND THE GATES

- 50 Outside Looking In

TANJUNG TUCK

- 52 Under the Cashew Nut Tree

HIGHLIGHTS

- 56 KEEPING TRACK



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Cover artwork and photograph by Alec Chin. USM has been engaging the 'bottom billion' in the community to improve their livelihood.

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From the Chief Editor

One does not need to overcome acrophobia (fear of heights) by stepping out of the lofty ivory tower to address the needs of the bottom billion that forms the largest segment of the social pyramid. That is what this issue is about - community engagement - and is something that runs in the veins of USM over the years. Many in its fraternity are involved in community-based activities and they give hope to those who needed it.

There is another important piece of history that *The Leader* has: the story of Persatuan Siswazah Universiti Sains Malaysia, Zon Tengah (Selangor dan Kuala Lumpur) (p. 6). In conjunction with alumni activities, there was a fun-filled biennial Sirih Pulang ke Gagang (dinner function) held on 23 Oct in Kuala Lumpur (p. 28).

The editorial team wishes to thank Assoc Prof Mohamed Talhah Idrus for his invaluable service as the Director of Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni and Chief Editor of *The Leader* magazine. He will continue

to contribute to the magazine especially *The Other Residents* department. We also want to thank Zulkifli Osman for his past contributions to the magazine.

As part of the process of renewal, we wish to welcome Orasa Awang and Chan Suan Choo on board as editorial team members.

We also want to record our thanks to Liew Year Woh for granting us the permission to reproduce his e-mail (p. 17). It offers us a glimpse of life on campus during the early years.

In the meantime, we appeal to our alumni to write about your student days in USM (about 500 words) and e-mail to us.

Wishing all a Happy New Year for 2011!

Chief Editor
Yong Check Yoon

Artwork by Alec Chin



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Down from the

Lofty Tower

Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
B. Pharmacy '76



From an Ivory Tower to a Trading Tower and now a Human Tower! These are the three major waves that can be ascribed to the evolution of universities in recent times.

From being institutions which are isolated and engrossed in academic work for its own sake, universities were suddenly thrust into another role - to cooperate with industry as a means of transferring their knowledge for commercial use.

This task is so dominant that many fear that universities have somewhat been transformed into trading posts where knowledge becomes commodities to be traded. With the advent of patents and intellectual property rights, education turned into 'big' business with industry as a partner.



Disaster and Emergency Medical Assistance Team (DEMAT), USM Muzafarabad Earthquake (Pakistan), October 2005

Now universities create their own commercial arms to convert knowledge into material wealth as investment.

Generating income becomes a preoccupation of modern universities, especially when governments are no longer able to support their development financially.

The image of a Trading Tower is becoming so prominent that there are entities called Corporate University being set up to lend support to such activities.

This has led to the notion of for-profit education in the name of democratisation in the world of free enterprise!

Former Harvard University president Derek Bok passionately argues in his book *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialisation of Higher Education* that tertiary institutions are risking their core mission in pursuit of money even when they have to compromise on fundamental academic values. Although it is gaining acceptance - at the expense of losing public trust and respect - this is a dilemma for many.



USM students at a 'Home-Party' Session on pap smear and the prevention of cervical cancer

In many ways, the image of the distant Ivory Tower is being resurrected when higher education institutions work hand in glove with corporations on funded-for-profit research, which is cloaked in a shroud of secrecy.

Some border on the unethical side, laced with conflicts of interest and questionable activities.

In view of this, universities need to once again maintain their position as providers of public good and defenders of public conscience to keep the trust of the people intact.

A university is not for sale to the highest bidder.

Moreover, there is a growing awareness that universities are not the sole custodian of knowledge; and this is where due recognition to the community has not been fairly given.

While there are interactions between the academia and the community, to a great extent, these are asymmetrical.



Training for Staff of Rapid Penang Bus Company in Disability Awareness (2009–2010)

Universities claim to have the upper hand and often look down on the society as being 'unschooled' and therefore not worthy of any in-depth engagement. To understand this better, we have to reflect on what Ivan Illich wrote in *Deschooling Society* (1971): "Health, learning, dignity, independence and creative endeavour are defined as little more than the performance of the institutions which claim to serve these ends, and their improvement is made to depend on allocating more resources to the management of hospitals, schools and other agencies in question." A much deeper discussion is needed on what scholarship is all about. It is particularly relevant in this increasingly dehumanising and unsustainable society that schools (including universities) are perpetuating since the industrial revolution.*

Education hence emphasises "employability" rather than "liveability", where "earning" becomes more important than "learning". Their courses that are deemed to be marketable are given priority over the non-marketable.*

Fortunately that is now fast changing with universities experiencing the next wave - as a Human Tower.

In this phase, universities need to 'wear their human face' on their journey to engage with the community.

This would involve mutual learning and co-creation of new knowledge for the benefit of humanity, an imperative that has long eluded the realm of knowledge.

This is even more significant when it comes to those who are most vulnerable and at risk, as Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin noted when he launched *Reaching Out... Making THE Difference*, a book documenting Universiti Sains Malaysia's (USM) drive towards community engagement last week.

Ultimately, it is about empowering the community to seek its own destiny with university as a partner.


Mohamed Khaled says: "For ages, past institutions of higher learning have been founded to support the society in which they stand, as a place where human talents are promoted and knowledge is generated and further developed."

"In the modern era, the predominant task of universities has been to serve as an extension of national power, supporting local communities and playing a role as the basis for the development of industry and society."

Given the turmoil that the world is in currently, it is only fitting that this responsibility is enhanced once again beyond the mantra of "publish-or-perish".

The Higher Education Ministry deserves to be lauded for being bold enough to suggest a new track for promotion as a way to recognise the importance of community engagement without compromising on the rigour and robustness demanded of a scholar.

That said, USM is ready to take the lead as reflected in the title of the newly launched book. As Mohamed Khaled noted, the emphasis is on the word "THE".

"I believe that as an APEX university, USM has unambiguously embraced the principle of engagement as a core value." 

* *Dzulkifli Abdul Razak, Perspective: Deschooling Society, New Straits Times (10 July 2010)*

@ Anjung Budi



Tawau Project

A lunch-hour band performance was held on 4, 6, 11 and 14 October to help raise funds for Tawau flood victims. It was organised by the School of Art in collaboration with the USM Jazz Band, Student Affairs and Development Division and Pejabat Pemaujan dan Perhubungan Alumni.

Hari Raya PPPA

Pejabat Pemaujan dan Perhubungan Alumni played host to more than 200 invited staff and alumni at its Hari Raya gathering on 27 September. The guests tucked into a sumptuous spread comprising local delicacies such as *ketupat*, *satay*, *laksa*, *rendang* and *ais kacang*.



Awani Shooting

Kamarul Bahrin Haron from Astro Awani Channel interviewed USM panelists about USM APEX status on 6 and 7 October. The programme, filmed at Anjung Budi for the Sudut Pandang programme, entitled *Kecemerlangan Universiti APEX* was telecast on 12 Oct at 10 pm.



Ramadan Function

About 50 Muslim staff, alumni and students came together to hold the breaking of fast, organised by USM Alumni Association at Anjung Budi on 3 September. They were treated to a buffet spread.



Text by Saw Cheang Kee and Yong Check Yoon.
Photographs by Yong Check Yoon.

Coming into Being

Abdul Rais Majid
B. Soc. Sc. '74

Rais reminiscing the formation of PSUSM

Graduates during the 1970s were a lucky lot. They were easily employed and their wallets were well loaded.

The first several months after graduation saw us on unfamiliar grounds with new found wealth (got money in the pocket for the first time) partying every weekend. We found out, soon enough, that the salary was not enough, or the wallets had holes in them, or in plain language, after paying the house rent, car installments, income tax deductions, Employee Provident Fund, and miscellaneous expenses there wasn't much left. So, back to meals at *warongs* and *gerai* (stalls), although this time around there was no Fu Manchu to offer 'buku tiga lima' (555 note book) facilities! So, again, no money to socialise.

The writer, too, had the same experience. Upon returning to Kuala Lumpur after attending graduate business school overseas, I realised I had no friends and was still a bachelor, after making some new friends, I was off again for an overseas posting with

the private sector. Six years later when I returned, now with a wife and two kids in tow, again I had to pick up the pieces to find old friends. I bumped into Hamdan Hj Omar (Soc Sc 1974), and (now Datuk) Abdullah Abdul Wahab (Soc Sc 1976) who happened to stay in my neighbourhood, both of whom had by then found new interests at the local mosque.

It happened one evening over *teh tarik* (tea with milk) at a *mamak* (Indian Muslim) stall in Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur, the discussion was on the lost years. The former Tabula Rasa boys were itching to play again. We had not met many of our old friends (they were getting on in years!). One thing led to another and we decided that we should organise a dinner to celebrate the 'Mael Years', fondly named after our dear colleague Ismail Ibrahim (Pharmacy 76).

Coming into Being



Huzaimah



'Bob'



Hamdan



Rastam



Zaiton



Omar

Some of PSUSM pioneers as they are today

The organising committee was Hamdan, Rastam Md. Isa (Tan Sri), Omar Haron, Bob, Rais, Huzaimah Md Yusoff, Zaiton Mohd Noh, Wan Chee Wing, Shamsul Kamar and some others. We got the ball rolling and organised a very successful dinner around the end of 1989. It was attended by about 300 people, well-supported and represented by a cross section of the graduating years. The function, held at the elegant ambience of The Paddock at the Hilton Kuala Lumpur, THE place to be in those days, was graced by the then Vice-Chancellor (VC), Tan Sri Musa Mohamed, and many guests coming all the way from Penang. We did not have financial support from any party, so we had to put personal money upfront. Every aspect of the organising such as ticket sales, decorations, all arrangements and reception was done by the committee members. The band in attendance was none other than Tabula Rasa members who performed to their hearts' content for the entire evening.

Through personal networking and alumni support, we garnered sponsorship in the form of advertisements and prizes from large corporations. We all had fun but more importantly, built a platform for networking among USM alumni. While we addressed the 'lost friends' issue, we also had some cash leftover through very tight fiscal control over expenses, maybe because the Treasurer was a banker!

Unlike these days, we could not afford to outsource the event management. We had to rent equipment for the band but these were mostly by people who held middle management positions in the corporate sector! A good problem to have since we had to account for the cash and how we had spent the money. Good corporate governance was the order of the day, so we had to legitimise ourselves.

Following the dinner, we started the ball rolling to form an Alumni association. There were many obstacles in going this route, from the bureaucracy at USM, arm-twisting maneuvering by some. We were informed that even the word "Alumni" was sacred to USM Penang-based association only. All these sensitivities threatened to undermine the fragile attempts to build the relationship among all Alumni of USM. The KL-based alumni were under pressure from our supporters - the graduates and corporate sponsors (read: employers) - to make good on our promises to be a serious undertaking. Although twenty years had passed after the establishment of USM, the graduates did not have an identity; "Kami Memimpin" (We Lead) remained a motto on the logo but the tigers were slow to leap out to reach out and provide the identity.

I remember even my bosses were openly talking about "we prefer MU". Thinking out of the box to mobilise the Alumni [finally the Persatuan Siswazah Universiti Sains Malaysia (PSUSM)], Zon Tengah (Selangor dan Kuala Lumpur), was registered with the Registrar of Societies in 1989. Hamdan was the President, (later Tan Sri) Rastam and Abdullah "Bob", Vice-Presidents; Huzaimah Yusof (Soc Sc 1973), Secretary; A Rais Majid (Soc Sc 1974), Treasurer; Wan Chee Wing (Humanities 1973), Committee Member were the pro-tem committee members. Shamsul Kamar, Loganathan, Shamsiah Mohamad and Francis Khor were among the early active supporters who contributed time, effort, and in some cases, personal funds. Perhaps, it is still not too late to record our appreciation to these people for their sacrifice and not expecting any reward, least of all financially.

Special Feature

Coming into Being

Members contributed a small fee to join PSUSM. The fees collected together with 'profits' from dinners supported the activities of the association. We even had a permanent address at 25-3 Medan Setia, Bukit Damansara, renting out a portion of it to an alumnus to operate his business. For those with religious inclination, we conducted *quran* reading classes at the premises. To facilitate networking, tea talks were also organised. Among the talks was one featuring (the late) Tan Sri Hamzah Sendut, our first Vice-Chancellor and another by a then director of Sime Darby Bhd who shared his wisdom on the economic climate and employment prospects. Of course, many coyly attended the functions with memories of their run-ins with VC still fresh when they were caught 'squatting' at the dorms or some other mischief! The membership list was impressive enough to receive offers by certain companies to purchase it for a fee, which was, of course, declined to preserve the privacy of its members.

The PSUSM was a serious undertaking with proper accounts kept and annual returns submitted regularly to ROS. Annual General Meetings were also conducted, not without its share of drama when on one occasion, a couple demanded to know what they can expect by joining the Alumni Association. Although very disappointed by this incident, this was not enough to break the spirits of the EXCO members as we continued to carry the USM flag.

The Annual Dinner became a regular affair in 1990 at the Hyatt Saujana Subang and 1991 again at The Paddock Hilton Kuala Lumpur. These events were well-attended and well-supported. It was also financially successful and we had a reasonable amount of money to finance our activities. With the wholehearted support from the VC and administration of USM, PSUSM proposed several programmes to the alma mater. As a token of our social responsibility, with the small amount of money available, we proposed a student loan fund of RM1,000 each to a Malay, a Chinese and an Indian student to finance their education at USM. For some unexplained reason, bureaucracy



PSUSM has grown over the years and is now known as Persatuan Alumni USM Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur dan Selangor

reared its ugly head again and this programme did not take off. We already had 1Malaysia in mind at that time! Perhaps we were among a handful, if not the only Alumni group, to undertake these initiatives!

The early 1990s' saw many of the Executive Committee core members climbing up the ladder of their careers with increasing responsibilities. For instance, by early 1993, Rastam had left for a diplomatic posting overseas, Rais went for international posting in the banking sector, Hamdan was given a plum assignment with a local conglomerate, and many others experienced similar fortunes. Unfortunately, there was no younger generation of Alumni to take over the reins to pursue the ideals of the PSUSM.

At the last count, we were informed that the balance in the bank account was sent to the Public Trustee as required by law and the PSUSM was allowed to slip into oblivion. Although another group tried to revive the association in subsequent years, apparently they had a different emphasis and it did not regain its glory. Apart from a few annual dinners and Hari Raya gatherings, other activities were few and far between. Perhaps, the current set-up of Pejabat Pemaajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni and USM Alumni Association will see more socially active and sustainable programmes being promoted.

The above article is an attempt to piece together the history of the establishment of the Alumni association in perspective. The records of PSUSM are not available at the time of writing and the facts were obtained from memory and interviews with Hamdan and Bob, and some others. The facts and events, although cannot be verified, are largely accurate and true to the best of the writer's knowledge. Please accept apologies for omission of names or inaccurate facts due to the above as it is not meant to discredit anyone. !

See at a recent REACH's programme
for the special children

REACH-ing out ...building Hope

Text and Photographs by Yong Check Yoon

Autism was once thought to be a mental illness and children with this disorder were sometimes incarcerated in mental institutions. For the public, autism was almost never heard of until movies such as 'Rain Man' (1988) and 'Mercury Rising' (1998) depicted the disorder.



Bringing in the participation of the family helps

It was in 1943 that Austrian psychologist Dr Leo Kanner associated autism with a disorder of neural development of the brain and progress has since been made into understanding this life-long mental disability.

In Penang, the Association of Resource and Education for Autistic Children (REACH) was established in 1987 by Lim Eng Chye, a Penang Lion's chapter member, with a group of 4 children. A year later, See Ching Mey (now Prof), from the School of Educational Studies, USM, joined the outfit, volunteering her fields of specialisation in educational psychology, counseling psychology and special education. She designs programmes to train the children to develop holistically and to help them become accepted members of society. The programmes also enable parents and siblings to understand the disorder so that they can try to engage their autistic children in activities.

There are currently 16 programmes involving more than 55 autistic children with ages ranging from five to 23 years, and their parents. Among the sessions were individual teaching-learning, art and creativity, music therapy, and snoezelan (specialised equipment that stimulates the senses) programmes.

Common Signs and Symptoms of Autism

- Displays indifference
- Adverse to cuddling
- Avoid eye contact
- Indicates needs by using an adult's hand
- Marked physical overactivity or extreme passivity
- Crying tantrums: Extreme distress for no discernible reason
- No fear of real dangers (e.g. dashing across the road)
- Inappropriate laughing or giggling
- Echolalic: Copies words like parrot
- Sustained odd play (e.g. plays alone, spins objects, or lines things up)
- Lack of imaginative play

Some Facts About Autism

- Features of autism usually appear during the first three years of life.
- Autism affects 10 to 15 of every 10,000 births of all racial, ethnic and social backgrounds.
- Autism is four to five times more common in males than females.
- Approximately 75% of autistic children are mentally retarded.
- Females with autism exhibit more severe mental retardation.
- About a third of all individuals with autism develop seizures - it can also occur with other conditions such as deafness, Down Syndrome and Fragile X Syndrome.
- People with autism vary widely in abilities, intelligence levels and behavioural characteristics.

REACH-ing out...building Hope

"We place great emphasis in supporting their parents and families in ways that they can enjoy the activities with their children," she said. "Our goal is the integration and inclusion of the children into the main stream education and community."

See added that the holistic training at the centre enables about 61% of the children to be placed in mainstream pre-school, primary and secondary school while 33% of them are in an integration programme (special class) in the mainstream school.

Besides training and counseling, See has also been conducting assessment and planning curriculum for the children; developing and coordinating the programmes; and visiting schools to advocate for autistic children. Her research into ways to help the children has given a lease of hope for a better quality of life to those who sought professional help.



Children having fun dancing during a karaoke session





See at a meeting with students who worked at the centre to understand what autism is about

“Our goal is the integration and inclusion of the children into the main stream education and community.”

– See Ching Mey

While inroads are made into the understanding of this disorder, recent figures showed that the number of autism cases is on the rise, affecting 1 in every 150 children compared with 5 in every 10,000 children some years ago.

See said, “Over the years, REACH thrives with funding from the Lions Clubs, companies, organisations and individuals.”  

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The Realm of the Estate

Hamima Dona Mustafa
B.A. '73

Photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin

Minden Memories

The Realm of the Estate

During the long vacation in 1971, seven of us, undergraduates from USM, signed up to work as research assistants in the rubber estate in the northern state of Peninsular Malaysia for an American visiting professor at the School of Education, Nat Colletta. Our task was to investigate Colletta's hunch that it was not one's ethnic origin that determined one's academic performance, but rather, whether one was poor or not. Pulau (not its real name) estate was selected because it was like a mini version of Malaysia comprising of three major ethnic groups of Chinese, Malay, and Indian rubber tappers.

Our group was made up of a pair of Chinese female and male students; two Malay research assistants, Rastam and I; and finally, two males, Pelani and Ilangovan and a female, Navajothi, all of Indian ethnic origin. Each pair had to interview rubber tappers from their same ethnic group, except for Ilangovan who was to interact with the management as well as the labourers.

We arrived at the estate by bus at noon. No one seemed to be around. Referring to the map sketched by Colletta we made our way to the clinic, a one floor structure. We had to wait for the hospital assistant, Mr Raj, who was our contact person, to turn up after the lunch hour. When he arrived he assigned us to our 'families'. Wan, his assistant became my foster sister.



The kitchen of an unoccupied quarters



Pak's present house on his own piece of land

"... some of the estate folks had quickly hidden their radio sets in the chicken coop when they heard of our coming, thinking that we were radio licence inspectors"

When we returned to Wan's house at the end of the day she introduced me to her mother, Mak. Her five-year old bright-eyed sister, Pah, was hiding behind her mother's batik sarong, out of shyness. Mak did not bat an eyelid when Wan told her that I would be staying with them for two months, as if they were so used to having students staying with them. I was touched at her family's ever-willingness to play host to someone they had barely known. The mention that we were university students was enough to make them open their door to us. (Later, though, I was to learn that some of the estate folks had quickly hidden their radio sets in the chicken coop when they heard of our coming, thinking that we were radio licence inspectors).

The rickety dark wooden dwelling unit that had seen better days was on stilts. There was no indoor plumbing. The space that was at the foot of the kitchen, outside the "house", was partitioned, to serve as the bathroom. Sometimes we used the community bathing area by the roadside when it was not crowded. We also shared the outhouse with several neighbours.

Pulau Estate experience (The name of the estate and persons involved with it have been changed to protect their anonymity).

The Realm of the Estate



The transformed workers' quarters



The interior of an unoccupied quarters

As researchers, our major daily chores were house to house visits as assigned. We also visited the schools to observe student performance and activities. When we returned to our respective foster families we interacted with them. After the evening prayers we had to report the day's work in our log books. Our allowance was RM7.00 a day. Colletta came twice to monitor our progress as well as to pay us our allowances.

The daily routine at my foster family's home was as follows: Mak and Pak woke up at 4.00 a.m. when the lights came on. Pak prepared the meal they would take to the work place. Mak hand washed the laundry. They left the house at 5.00 a.m.

Wan, being the eldest child, had her share of family responsibilities. Before going to work at the clinic where she assisted Mr Raj, Wan carried her youngest sister to the estate crèche close to the house. Five year-old Pah was sent to a neighbour's house. The other children, four boys, aged from eight to 16 got ready for school, walking about half a mile from the estate.

In the afternoon Pak and Mak returned. On the way Mak picked up the baby from the crèche. Pak chopped the firewood to prepare for the day's meal. Mak did the cooking which usually comprised of fish, vegetables and rice.

At 5.00 p.m. Pak went to clear the *kebun*, a tiny plot of land at the periphery of the estate where he grew some legumes and vegetables. Mak tended to the children's needs and did other chores at home. There were no radio or television sets for entertainment in my foster family's dwelling unit.

"...Mak would hold the small tin can with the burning wick close to the children. Her trained eye would spot the vermin and she had the satisfaction of crushing the bed bugs with her fingers on the mat where the family members lay their tired bodies."

Pak returned at sunset. The estate generator shut off at 10 p.m. after which everything had to be done by the kerosene light. Usually, before calling it a day Mak would check on the younger girls who shared the same sleeping floor space with her and Pak. The bed bugs that fed on her younger daughters' blood would bother the sleeping children. When the girls moved or scratched the spot where they had been bitten Mak would hold the small tin can with the burning wick close to

the children. Her trained eye would spot the vermin and she had the satisfaction of crushing the bed bugs with her fingers on the mat where the family members lay their tired bodies. On the walls the shadows cast by the kerosene light leapt and danced.

The four boys slept in a row at the front section of the house. A cupboard separated them and the prized brass bed which I had the privilege of sharing with Wan.

One of my memorable moments was a picnic with the family at the kebun. It was on the tappers' day off. Mak and Pak wanted me to take back some enjoyable memories. Mid morning the family and I made our way to the spot carrying the pots containing cooked rice and fried fish. We spread them out in the *dangau* (makeshift resting place that farmers built by the rice fields or 'farm'). The younger children ran about chasing dragon flies. The teenagers gathered fresh pumpkin shoots, tapioca leaves and young beans to be eaten with *sambal belacan* (pounded red chillies with dried shrimp paste seasoned with tamarind juice, sugar and salt). We washed the food down with fresh water brought from the house. That outing got us all together for the first time in a relaxed mood. We ambled home after the noon hour with happy children in tow, ready for their nap.

One other happening that I shall never forget was the day I got sick to my stomach. It took place one hot afternoon, on my way back to the house after a whole morning of school observation and interviews with the teachers.

As I passed by the government midwife's house she was just taking off her shoes before stepping onto the verandah of her house. She had just left the clinic next to the house for her lunch break. She asked me to join her. I was grateful for the invitation as I was so hungry. The midwife laid out boiled tapioca, rice and fried fish, accompanied by *sambal belacan*. Did I binge. I paid the price soon after. As I made my way to the clinic to write the day's report in the log book as instructed by Colletta I felt much discomfort.

Mr Raj asked Wan to take me to rest at his house, the closest to the clinic. Mrs Raj fussed about to make me feel comfortable. She asked her teenage daughter, Ana, to bring a glass of milk for me.

"Sip some of this milk," she coaxed me.


Upon seeing that I looked so wretched she tried massaging my shoulders. That did the trick. I vomited into the plastic bag that Ana held close to my face. Feeling much relieved and overcome by the ordeal I fell asleep.

A *dangau* on the fringe of the estate

My foster family came to Mr Raj's house on hearing what had happened to me from Wan. Mr Raj told them that I should be all right in the morning and that I should just spend the night at his house, sharing Ana's room. I was still too weak so it was good that I could stay on in the comfortable and spacious room. To this day I never touch boiled tapioca again.

A few years after graduation I visited my foster family again. Their dilapidated house had been replaced by a concrete one with indoor plumbing. My graduation photo of 1973 graced a central part in Wan's showcase in the living area. Pak said their living conditions had improved because of our 'stay' with them. Not too long after that the privately-owned estate ceased operating due to a number of factors. The rubber tappers and other employees had to pack up their belongings and resort to their own devices. Fortunately, Wan's family could turn to working on Pak's piece of land.

What originated as a research project initiated by a visiting professor at the University evolved into a fulfilling network of relationships. I still return to the small town where Pak presently lives, to attend family events such as weddings and births. Sad to say, Mak has passed away. So has Wan, who, over the years, had worked with a government clinic in a nearby town.

My contact person these days is Pah the 'imp' who had shadowed me around the neighbourhood since the day she peered at me from behind her mother's sarong those many years ago. 

Dr Hamima Dona Mustafa can be reached at drhamima@yahoo.com



It is such a wonderful feeling to 'come back' to USM - after reading *The Leader*. I have gathered so many valuable ideas and knowledge from USM as well as wonderful memories. Keep up with the good work.

Thanks.

Prof Dr Fauziah Haji Abdul Aziz
B. Sc. '83

Bravo on the latest edition of *The Leader*! It is heartening to see that the campus grounds are maintained in such a pristine condition. I learned about the significance of the Basel Mission tiles and I am very glad that we are preserving it.

Tan Cheng See
B. Mgnt. '98

"Bravo to the Team!". Must say the SEPTEMBER 2010 is an impressive issue. Being a Kelantanese but residing in Seremban since late 1983, I really enjoyed reading *A Siti's Tale*. Thanks to Alec Chin for remembering to include the unique 'loghat' in his text. I could understand all of it and laughed heartily while reading. Also, kudos to him for capturing the typical facial expressions in those snapshots. Just full of reminiscence for me.

Teoh Ning
(On behalf of his mother , Lim Keng Siew. B Sc with Edu '80)

From Start to End [Volume 5 No.3] was very well presented.
I love reading it.

Noor Salma Noor Lajis
VC's Personal Assistant (1995-2007)

We have reproduced Liew Yean Woh (B. Humanities '75)'s e-mail to a fellow alumni to muse about the experiences they had in USM. For once, we decided to make an exception and maintain the letter almost in its originality, peppered with Malay words (which we had them translated []).

- The Editorial Board

Hi Saudara Chan,

Thanks a million. I am deeply touched by your kind gesture of linking us with the lost ones in the wilderness. It is always nostalgic to me to meet or communicate with old USM *saudara* [brothers] and *saudari* [sisters] whom we have not seen since the last few exam days. Convo Days did not provide us the opportunity as we had our supporters from our families tagging along while we were too busy trying to meet old classmates/yearmates/coursemates/roommates/bedmates or to capture pictures with our love ones for our fading memories during old age where we can then show-off to our *cucu* [grandchild] or *cicek* [great grandchild] (or *cicak* [lizard]) in the later years.

We also had to be tour leaders for our family members who had never been to our Gurkha Kampus before where we met our king ragers like Mano, Rajan Moses, and others. Indeed, these ragers really squeezed the life out of us freshies!!! You know how I escaped being ragged by the seniors or bullies? I camouflaged myself like a senior. No freshie tag, no scarf or to portray any facial look of a 'young Phang' the name whom we always associate with our successful, self-made Phang Sow Yoong of USM Mass Comm '76, who had a 'first child made in Kelantan' she claimed when we first met our YB (*Yang Berbising* [The Noisy One]) Naim where we organised in our first of the many series of 'lost and found' meet-together at the Royal Selangor Club (where *Saudari* baby Shandha is a member) or Tropicana Club.

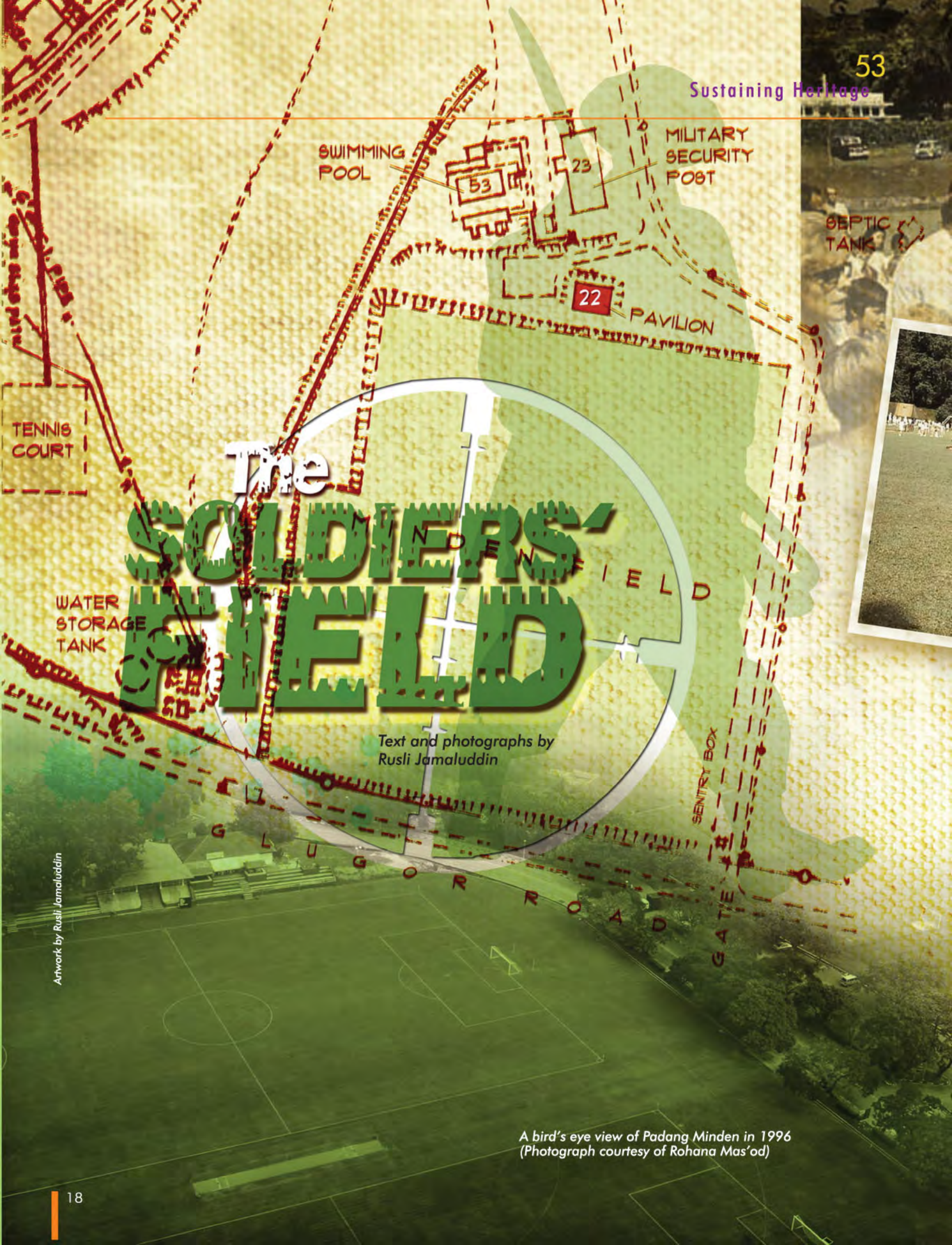
Among the many 'lost & found' dinners we had was with another YB (also *yang berbising* [The Noisy One] during Kampus days!!) Abdul Rahman Sulaiman (Bernama Chief now), another associate prof (*alamak* [opps] name *tak* [cannot] remember due to old age *lah*) at the PJ Victoria Station where our St Patrick from Melbourne could not even recognise some of his course-mates while walking pass them in the restaurant. YB Rahman Sulaiman who had among his strings of accolades or degrees, also

included and ended with 'from the School of ISA'!!! (Please do not mistaken ISA with ISO which means / *Susahkan Orang* [I make life difficult for people]) YB Rahman Sulaiman who looked so macho during his days in Gurkha Kampus while driving his jalopy Volvo with number plate 44, nowadays looks so unrecognisable as when he was in Kampus before he was detained in Kemunting, Taiping, for all our struggle and demonstrations over the Baling, Sik and Tasik Utara issues where the poor and down trodden could not buy a *kati* [equivalent to 600 grammes] of sugar by selling two *katies* of sheet rubber!!! And the Tasik Utara poor residents who were *halau* [evicted] from the birth-place by government eviction programme where, most unfortunately, they did not have leaders like Kak Sham's father did in Selangor, just to be the *peneroka* [settlers] (*alamak sudah lupa* [opps, have forgotten] our Bahasa Jiwa Bangsa, *kaput lah* after retirement, do not write Bahasa anymore. Only speak English, Spanish and rubbish).

In June 2010, the last nostalgic gathering I had to gate-crash into a get-together organised by our pioneer Peter Ho and his wife and Tan Kok Soon of Year '72 and '74 (the pioneer batches of USM graduates) who led in the organisation of the first coming home of the pioneers which did not include us of year 1975.

When I was first contacted by YB Naim from KB, I straight away contacted Peter Ho who was then in Ghangzhou (Canton) busily shopping or bargaining with manufacturers of bags for his travelling bag business in the Klang Valley under his empire-building chain of outlets called the 'Wing', so appropriately named as we know 'have wings will travel'!!! Not necessary right, as the Kiwi, Emu or ostriches have forgotten to fly unless we force them to when they are young.

Well so much for the first chapter otherwise my computer will smoke for being over-worked *lah*!!



SEPTIC TANK



The
SOLDIERS' FIELD

Text and photographs by
 Rusli Jamaluddin

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin

A bird's eye view of Padang Minden in 1996
 (Photograph courtesy of Rohana Mas'od)

The Soldiers' Field

Pavilion



A glimpse of Padang Minden in the early 60's showing Block 22 (pavilion), 23 (known as 'Red House' today) and 53 (swimming pool) in the background. Inset: school children (Photographs courtesy of www.mindenbarrack.com)



inden campus is multifaceted. A casual stroll along its many roads and paths reveals a mixture of the old and new as with the stark contrasts of spacious open areas and congested clusters of buildings. Over the years as the campus' space shrinks, it becomes more apparent that open spaces is a luxurious place for one to wallow in fresh air and sunshine. Moreover, many of these open spaces are where people come to muse, sit and watch the world drift by or just 'doing nothing' which, after all, is the reason for being there, at old Minden.

There is a spot where it had offered members of the British army recuperating from illness during the bygone era to benefit from a breezy wide open space: the Padang Minden (Minden Field). The Padang has over the years served as a recreational field and also a communal space for the Minden community.



Prosaically called the “soldiers’ field” in the good old days, soldiers occupying Minden would swarm this place when opportunity presented itself for fun or games. In the days before the advent of air-conditioning, the residents spend time here to catch the cool breezes blowing in from across the road. The sprawling green lawn imposed a sense of ‘private estate’ filled with breathtaking beauty and serenity. It all makes one wonder what would have been to Minden if it is not for the Padang.

The sprawling green lawn imposed a sense of ‘private estate’ filled with breathtaking beauty and serenity. It all makes one wonder what would have been to Minden if it is not for the Padang.

The Padang’s skyline is unimpressive but it is always congenial and inviting. Overlooking the Padang was a pavilion where spectators can watch events or sport matches from its airy verandah, but even then this pavilion has undergone transformation in recent years with renovations and extensions made. Tiered concrete seats had also been built, shaded by the massive canopy of leaves of trees that have grown in both girth and height over the past 40-odd years. The grassy slopes flanking the staircase leading from the field to the pavilion are mostly gone.

The British sappers had meticulously planned in a manner that would blend well into their idyllic home ground exact opposite. It was also intended to give a personal touch creating an impression of ‘power and authority’ while regulating the orderliness of an army camp. Moreover, the pavilion is strategically built to have a commanding view of the Padang.

The Soldiers' Field



The soldiers of Princess Mary's Own Gurkha Rifles at Padang Minden. Pictures taken in the early '60s. (Photographs courtesy of www.mindenbarrack.com)

Underneath the deceptive calm of the Padang, it was the venue for many army activities. These verdant swaths of land was the soldiers' favorite staging ground for 'outdoor gigs' and 'thrill shows' as aged photographs offer a warm glimpse of life then. The activities helped to shape the character of the Minden's military and civilian community. Photographs captured a grand mixed bag of events and celebrations proliferated during the Gurkha regiments. The Padang was not only became the focal point of get-together but often the source of much merriment and joy then.

According to a local eyewitness Ahmad Boi, an ex-personnel of the Royal Army Service Corps, the Padang has grown from a small, family weekend 'fun-day' to a larger gathering of perennial non-sporting events. The fair also offered the public a show of strength and chivalry of the Gurkha soldier slaying a buffalo-bull with a single blow of his curved knife, *khukuri*.

"The events drew massive crowds to this pavilion as it offered unobstructed view of the entire field," he said.

Boi recalled the large turnouts for merrymaking occasions marked on the social calendar of Minden barracks' days.

"Amid much pomp and ceremony, the soldiers clad in white uniforms marched to the traditional music of drums and bagpipes," he added, "The crowd hollered, "*Ayo Gorkhali*" (literally meaning "here comes the Gurkhas!" in the Nepali language). The entire Padang then echoed with the resonance of gunshots for few seconds signifying the start of celebrations."

The Pavilion as it is today with a shaded front, welcoming guests to enjoy the breeze while having their meal

A photograph from the sixties portrays a white-painted 1939 recreation pavilion in hip-roofed style glinting under the sun at the end of the Padang. How typical this was of the deep verandah structure neatly nestled in its beautiful natural setting. The quaint building is as 'original' as it gets. The outside appearance gives no clue that it had once served as a military guard room and an arrest lock-up. Inside this pavilion was once a chairless drinking bar where soldiers can have their casual 'bottom-ups' without too many distractions.



Views of the iconic buildings that witnessed soldiers swarming the field for recreation when Minden was a military encampment



In the course of the years the pavilion has been rudimentarily remodeled to keep abreast with the times. The once prominent structure is now losing its visual individuality due to the adjoining extension of other buildings. Again, one should not be too hard on it, for times are undeniably changing. Despite of everything, the fortunate residents of Minden still have in abundant beauty of nature to admire at their very doorsteps. 🏡

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

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

Photographs by
Yong Check Yoon

Dark clouds unleashed torrential rain on Kampung Pasir Putih, Tawau, Sabah, East Malaysia, on 29 July 2010. Within three hours flood waters rose to dangerous levels because of poor drainage system, aggravated by rivers breaching their banks. Three roads were impassable to vehicles and there were reports of landslides when water-logged slopes gave way.



Puan Sri Masrah Haji Abidin, the Vice-Chancellor's wife, contributing towards the Tawau Project

RIISING AGAINST ADVERSITY



The band in action for a good cause



Two houses were washed away. About 500 others were either damaged or destroyed. The worst since 1999 the floods affected homes of several USM students and alumni members and a kindergarten. Vehicles were part of the casualties.


Kalabakan Member of Parliament, Datuk Abdul Ghapur Salleh, estimated the damages to be RM60 million. To date contributions from government and various other sources amounted to RM 115,000.

In response to the dire need to repair the village, Pusat Pengajian Seni, Pembangunan Seni dan Budaya, and USM Jazz Band (USMJB) collaborated with Pejabat Pemajuan and Perhubungan Alumni, and Persatuan Siswa-Siswi Sabah (PERSIS) initiated the 'Tawau Project - We Care'.

"We want the villagers to get back on their feet and carry on with their lives."

- Andy Siti Nurhidayah Rahim

USM Jazz Band and Dewan Budaya Band teamed up to perform on six occasions at Anjung Budi and Anjung Semarak on the main campus, culminating at Dewan Budaya on 21 October. During these occasions tee-shirts and decorative pins were also sold.

The coordinator of the project, Andy Siti Nurhidayah Rahim, said, "We want the villagers to get back on their feet and carry on with their lives." 

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal is currently the Assistant Registrar at the Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), USM. She can be contacted at darr_wynn@yahoo.com

Management 1988

The Pioneers



ABDUL RAZAK
AHMAD ARSHAD



ABDUL RAHIM
AHMAD



AHMAD TARMIZI
DAUD



AHMAD ZAINUDDIN
SALLEH



ASHRI BAHARI



CHAN SHEN MEE



CHEE PEI PEI



CHEN CHOW KYAN



CHEONG CHAW
PENG



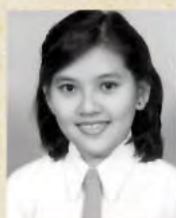
CHONG YONG
CHUAN



DALJIT KAUR
PRITAM SINGH



DANDAI POLIS
UDDANG



FAN YIN SHIANG



FATIMAH KHAMIS



FAZIAH @ MAZNAH
HJ ISMAIL



FOO SIANG MENG



GAN SIOK CHIN



GEETHA K
BALAKRISHNA



HASSIM ALI



HONG CHAIK SIM



KAMARUZAMAN
ZAINAL



KHOO BEE LAY



LEE HONG LOCK



LEONG KHAI FATT



LEOW HONG CHU



LIM CHEW LENG



LIM KEAT WAH



MAHYAT ZAKARIA



MAZLAN IDRIS



MD HANIF SENAWI



MOHAMAD ROSLI
HAJI AHMAD



MOHAMED AMIR
ABDUL JALIL



MOHAMMAD SABRI
SAAD

Management 1988



MOHD BADRI
OSMAN



MOHD KAMALLUDDIN
KAMIL MOHAMED
NOOR



MOHD RAHIM
SAAD



MUSTAFA
MOKHTAR



NG HOCK KEE



NG KIM ENG



NOR MOHAMAD
HASAN



NORLIZA AMAT



ONG CHIN KHEE



PANG KIM CHON



QUAH HOOI MENG



RAMAYAH THURASAMY



ROSE LEE NYET
YOONG



ROSLAN REJAB



SALMI MOHD
NOOR



SANTHI SHANMUGAM



SETH JAMALUDDIN



SHAHRUDDIN ABD AZIZ



SHANTI DEVI
BANGAH



SHUCK LEE PING



SOO BEE SIM



TAN SOOK KEE



THOCK KIAH WAH



VIJAYALAXMI KANDASAMY



WAN SHAMSUDIN
AWANG



YEO HONG ING



YIP MENG LOENG



ZAIOM MUDA



ZAINI NOR



ZAINOL ABD RAHMAN



ZAZLI ZAINUDDIN



ZULKIFLI MOHD ISA

Integrating vermicast from the School of Biology into the soil as a fertiliser



A student transplanting vegetable seedlings



Culinary garden

Mahfuzah Othman
B. Sc. '09

Photographs courtesy
of Mahfuzah Othman

The 'Culinary Garden', which has transformed some of the open space on campus into a garden of vegetables, such as, spinach, okra, cucumbers, chillies, carrots and eggplants, is a project initiated by a team of students from the Association of Pharmaceutical Sciences, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, in collaboration with the Eco-Hub of USM.

The garden aims to educate the campus community on the importance of organic plants in ecological sustenance. It also produces supplies of fresh, nutritious and cheap organic crops grown with vermicast (worm humus) provided by the School of Biological Sciences. Agencies, such as the Malaysian Agriculture Research Development Institute (MARDI) and Agriculture Department of Pulau Pinang help with professional advice.

Besides proving that students outside the field of agriculture can successfully implement the project, it also illustrates how pharmacists are able to appreciate and recognise the benefits of plants in the medical field. Besides that, the students are able to learn how to become successful entrepreneurs when they set out to sell the vegetables to the campus community and canteen operators at competitive prices. **L**

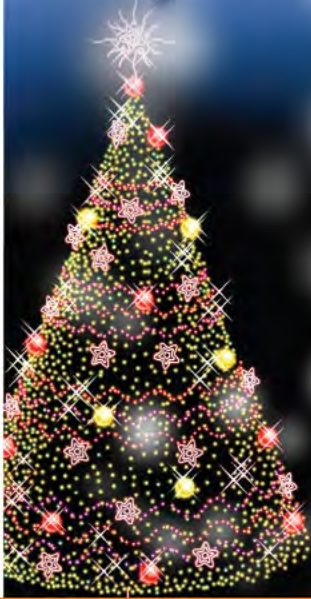
Pharmaceutical School students learn everything about organic farming

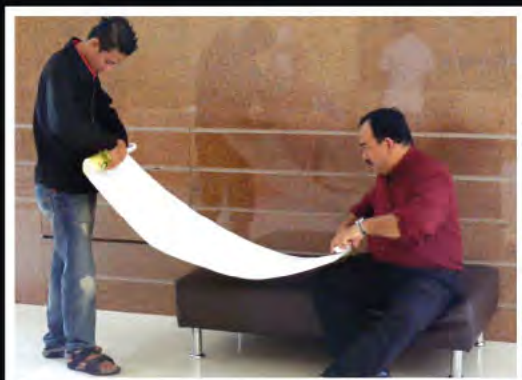


Greetings from **THE LEADER**

Happy New Year
Merry Christmas

Salam Ma'al Hijrah





A Grand Night to Remember



The Tokohs are (from right) Huzaimah, Rais, Ahmad Ghazali, Shaifubahrim and Zulkifli Itam



The ninth Malam Sireh Pulang ke Gagang dinner, held on 23 October at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre in Kuala Lumpur, was attended by about 500 alumni and guests. Among the performers were Tan Sri and the Boys, Phobia LL, The Echoes, Tabularasa, and AUSM Jazz Band.

During the event, five outstanding alumni received the Tokoh (a notable personality) Alumni USM 2010 Awards. They were Zulkifli Itam (B. Soc. Sc. '74), Shaifubahrim Mohd Saleh (B. Comp. Sc. '83), Ahmad Ghazali Md Kassim (B. Soc. Sc. '75), Abdul Rais Abdul Majid (B. Soc. Sc. '74) and Datin Huzaimah Mohd Yusoff (B. Soc. Sc. '74) received their awards from D.Y.M.M. Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin Ibni Al-Marhum Tuanku Syed Putra Jamalullail, the Chancellor of USM. The 'Tokoh Alumni' Award is to give due recognition to any alumni who has made significant contributions to USM and the society in general.

At the same function, D.Y.M.M. Tuanku Syed Sirajuddin launched the USM Alumni Jazz Band and presented a check worth RM 2,000, contributed by Pejabat Peminatan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA).

The event was co-organised by USM Alumni Association for Kuala Lumpur and Selangor, USM Alumni Association and PPPA.



Texts by Yong Check Yoon. Photographs by Yusuf Suid and Yong Check Yoon.



Lifelong Service

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



Their mission is to serve. Whether they whine or sing, hunt or flee, give birth or lay eggs, their human counterparts ultimately benefit from these activities. Each of these is intricately woven within a complex web of cause and effect resulting in a harmonious environment of greenness, freshness and pleasing visuals.

A *Kedidi* (common sandpiper) working a polluted Jelutong shoreline



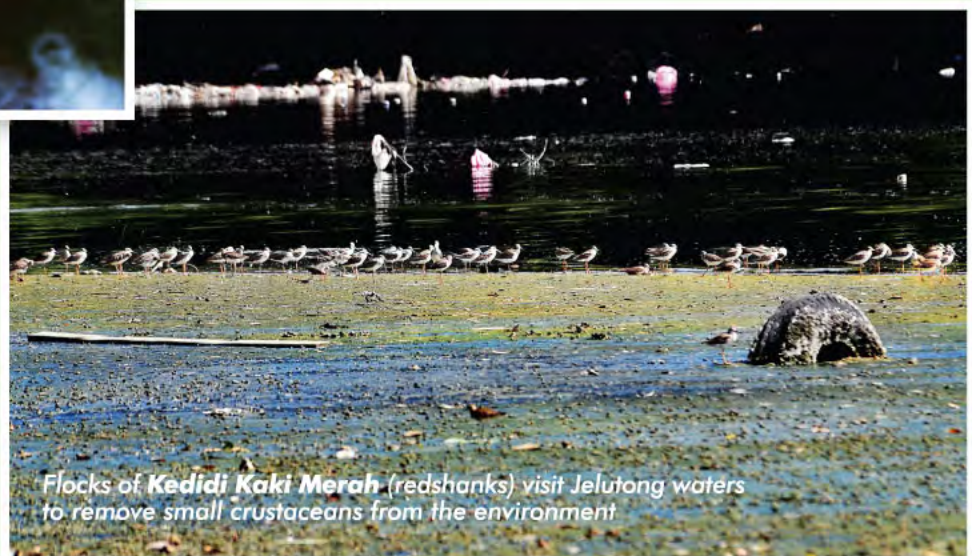
This small **Burung Sambar** (Asian Brown Flycatcher) is swift in snatching insects

In devouring the minutest of organisms, for example, a ladybird is removing microscopic aphids from becoming 'pests'. Multiply this tiny predator by one thousand more ladybirds, a few thousand potentially troublesome aphids will be removed from our surroundings. Compound the same activity with lizards, frogs, snakes, birds and other carnivores and omnivores, one will have a relatively 'pest'-free environment, without the human resident even realising that they have been spared from spending extra ringgits on controlling those 'pests'.

Birds are most noticeable in their services as pest controllers. They prey on seemingly 'useless' other residents like dragonflies, bugs, and 'dangerous' residents like snakes.



A dragonfly has fallen prey to this **Birik-Birik** (Brown-throated Bee-eater)



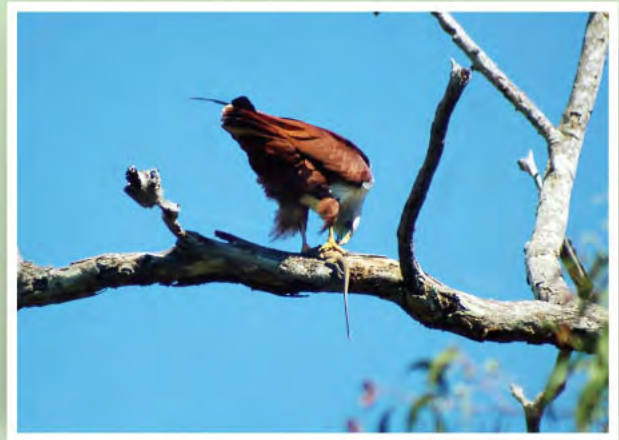
Flocks of **Kedidi Kaki Merah** (redshanks) visit Jelutong waters to remove small crustaceans from the environment

On a happy note, the natural talents of the other residents have not gone totally unnoticed. Apart from common domesticated animals, cormorants, falcons and hawks help humans directly in hunting for game. On another end of the scale, it takes little training to use falcons in deterring other birds from desecrating the famed Burj Al-Arab hotel.

In Malaysia, some remote fishermen have trained *Memerangs* (otters) to fish, while the *Beruk* is still used in some kampongs to pluck coconuts. In Pulau Pinang various *Bangaus* (egrets and cranes) help inshore fishermen to indicate the whereabouts of shrimps and shellfish.

Some countries are already tapping the natural activities of the other residents to boost their economies. Bird-watching is a billion-dollar industry in America, and Europe. Even whale-watching has enabled whalers in countries where they can be spotted to derive better income by being 'whale-guides'.

A harmonious and gratifying interaction of human and bird residents on Kangaroo Island, Australia



*Maybe this **Lang Kawi** (Brahminy kite) is insinuating to Minden campus officials of the most efficient way to tackle the **Bewak** (monitor lizard) problem*



***Bangau Besar** (large egrets) assist fishermen in Jelutong in indicating the locations of fish and crustaceans*



A spider with a small grasshopper

Sadly, the bigger roles of these residents for human wellness are not realised. Birds as pest (and species) controllers have been overshadowed by the beauty of their feathers and the sweetness of their songs, if they are at all appreciated. The talents of birds in Malaysia have been reduced to entertaining their human captors with their sweet music. Even in USM the *Merbuk* (Spotted Doves) and *Terkukur* (Ring-necked Pigeon) are targets of such enthusiasts. Some poachers are even more brazen as to enter USM with the intention of trapping the lucrative *Murai Batu* (White-Rumped Shama).

Apart from the diminishing colours and the fading of sweet natural music, it is this short-sighted view of the other residents that adds to the incremental cost of pest control, including in USM. The university community, especially its law-enforcing arm should be constantly educated about the huge services being provided by these other residents, F.O.C. 🇲🇾



While sucking nectar a butterfly becomes a pollinating agent



Animal scats will finally be returned to the ground as organic fertilisers

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

5th Beijing Muslim Tours

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

Note: Halal food will be served for meals and itinerary is subject to change. Abbreviations used: B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner. Tour scheduled for April 2010.

D1 Beijing (L/D)

Early morning arrival in Beijing. Tour begins with a visit to **Tiananmen Square** which is the largest city square in the world, followed by the **Great Hall of the People**. Then, a tour of the **Forbidden City** which was home to the emperors for over 500 years. The imperial palace complex consists of grand halls and courts which gradually give way to more 'intimate domestic quarters, giving an insight into the pampered isolation of the emperors'. We then visit the Muslim enclave and the **Niujié Mosque** for Zohor prayers. After lunch, we will shop at the nearby **Muslim Supermarket**, the only supermarket for the Muslim community in Beijing. The afternoon programme also includes a visit to the **Silk Showroom**. For the evening, enjoy a performance of the famed **Beijing Acrobatic Show**.

D2 Beijing (B/L/D)

Day two begins with the highlight of this China tour - the climbing of the **Great Wall of China**. This massive structure which was first built during the Era of Warring States (475-221BC) as a series of earthworks erected by individual kingdoms as a defense against each other as well as from invasions from the north. The present-day remains of the wall are the legacy from the Ming dynasty. Lunch will be at a local Muslim restaurant near the Great Wall, followed by shopping at the **Jade and Crystal Center**. Next, prepared to be awed during your visit the **Burning Cream Centre**. Dinner will be at a famous Muslim restaurant.


D3 Beijing (B/L/D)

Morning tour begins with a visit to the **Summer Palace**, the largest imperial garden in China. First built during the reign of Qianlong, a Qing Emperor, in 1751, it was burned down in 1860 by the French and British army. The palace was later restored by the Empress Dowager Cixi for her own pleasure. It became a favorite haunt of Cixi who preferred it to the Forbidden City and had named it Yihe Yuan which means 'Gardens of Nurtured Harmony'. Next, shopping at the **Fresh Water Pearl Center** and after that, enjoy a free traditional foot massage at the Chinese medicine centre. After lunch, we visit the famous **Madian Mosque** with its history that dates back hundreds of years. Make sure to visit **Hard Rock Café** for a tee-shirt after dinner.

D4 Beijing (B/L/D)

We take a drive around the new highlights of Beijing - the **Olympic Village** and other incredible 2008 Games venues like the **National Stadium**, also known as the **Bird's Nest** and the **National Aquatics Center** or the **Water Cube**, followed by a visit to a jewelry shop. Partake in the tea ceremony at the tea house before a trip to the kitchen appliance shop. More shopping time will be allocated at **Xiushui Market (Silk Street)**, **Tianya Hongqiao Market** for jewellery, **Sunny Gold Street** for clothes and accessories.

D5 Beijing (B)

After breakfast, transfer to the airport. Depart from Beijing. 



Limited places available on a first-come, first-served basis. For details, contact: Darweena (PPPA) Tel: 04-6534792

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal is currently the Assistant Registrar at the Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), USM. She can be contacted at darr_wynn@yahoo.com

Artwork by Rusli Jamoluddin

“...it would be impossible for the poor to take up business loans because they do not have collaterals for the banks, unless labor is considered as a form of collateral.”

POOR NO MORE

Yong Check Yoon
Photographs courtesy of Mechai Viravaidya

It is not possible to leave poverty eradication entirely to the government," Mechai Viravaidya told the Dewan Budaya audience during his public lecture on 4 October.

He explained that most governments, in helping the poor, usually conducted activities through the welfare approach, which does not foster new skills neither would it empower the poor. On the contrary, it creates greater dependency on handouts and therefore, unsustainable.

"Many of the poor are business people trying to make a profit but they remain poor because they lack business skills and access to credit," said Mechai. To overcome that obstacle, he remarked that access to credit must be made a human right. However, it would be impossible for the poor to take up business loans because they do not have collaterals for the banks, unless labour is considered as a form of collateral.

Mr Condom standing between condom-clad mannequins at his Cabbages and Condoms Restaurant



Fast Fact

Mechai was nicknamed 'Mr Condom' because of his pivotal role in Thailand's immensely successful family planning programmes, known to be one of the most rapid fertility declines in modern times (the average number of children per family declined to two in 2005, as compared to seven in 1974). He was also the chief architect in building Thailand's comprehensive national HIV/AIDS prevention policy and programmes (by 2004, the incidence of new HIV/AIDS cases fell by 90%). Mechai was appointed the UNAIDS Ambassador in 1999 and bestowed with numerous local and international awards e.g. Ramon Magsaysay Award for public service (1994), UN Population Award (1997), Time Magazine's "Asian Heroes" (2005) and Bill and Belinda Gates Award (2007).



The village committee conducting a community needs assessment

To address this problem, Mechai identified the private sector as a potential partner to successfully help extricating the poor out of poverty. Hence, the Population and Community Development Association (PDA), Thailand and the Meechai Viravaidya Foundation (MVF) initiated the Village Development Partnership (VDP) Programme to provide sponsoring companies or organisations with opportunities to work with rural villages to alleviate poverty. Based on a business approach for income generating rather than a welfare approach, VDP addresses the gap in basic needs by providing access to low-interest micro-credit loans and business skill trainings.

Unlike the welfare approach, PDA and MVF assist villages in the search for sponsoring companies/ organisations which agree to pay the villagers after 'tree-planting' activities are conducted. Villagers receive 40 Baht (US\$1.25/RM3.90) for each tree planted and each villager has to plant 120 trees. For a medium sized village of a population of 600, the village will receive US\$90,000 (RM279,000) to be placed in the Village Development Bank which then provides micro-credit loans to account holders in lieu of up to 90 days of community work (besides cash repayment).

To empower the villagers, the trained Village Development Bank manager is also chosen from among the community. "One of the bank managers (on a part-time basis) is a rice farmer and she has grown adept to her job," Mechai said, adding that with proper training, it does not take an academically qualified person to do the job.

To address the problem of the lack of skills to start a small business, VDP also provides villagers with trainings on production, financial management, marketing and day-to-day operations. Mechai calls this trained villagers 'Barefoot MBAs' who are then eligible to take loan from the Village Development Bank.

"As a result of the VDP, villages have been able to cultivate fruits and flowers, and out-of-season lime that generate a profit of about US\$65 (RM200) per plant annually," he said.





Empowering Communities

Other successful businesses include the venturing into biscuit and ice-cream making, mini pancakes, coffee-and-condom stalls. Chicken farms are turned into factories that manufacture ice skates and this helps to stem the migration of villagers to other towns in search of better paying jobs. Trees are also planted and sold to housing estates, golf courses and highways. In fact, tree cultivation has been so successful that the trees are exported to Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, increasing the income of once-impooverished villagers by 30-fold. Each successful village will then undertake to help ten others.

VDP also empowers communities by establishing gendered-balanced and democratically-elected village committees to plan and implement their own development endeavours.

Villagers are advised to elect a village development committee of which half must be women. This helps to underline the importance of gender equality. The elected committee carries out its own community needs assessment and establishes short- and long-term Village Development Plan. Once completed, the committee is taken on a field trip to observe successful business activities and generate additional ideas for their village plan.

Communities hard at work

A visit to the village by company staff is arranged to foster relationship. Villagers then finalise their development plan, prioritise activities, set time frame and identify the agencies that they have to work with in the course of running their business. They then submit their plan to seek a sponsor.

Mechai's poverty eradication method has a 35-year track record, and according to him, the villagers are proud of their personal achievement. They do not feel like 'beggars' in a welfare system because they earn every cent that they make through systematic and democratic empowerment. **L**

For further information, visit:

Population Development Association (PDA), Thailand

www.pda.or.th/eng

Mechai Viravaidya Foundation,

http://mechaifoundation.org/mechai_home.asp

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The *Art* of SCIENCE Learning

Saw Cheang Kee
Photographs by Yong Check Yoon

The USM Centre for Languages and Translation (which had its humble beginnings as the Language Unit in 1972) evolved into the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation (SoLLaT) in November 2008. It dovetailed with the Universiti being granted APEX (Accelerated Programme for Excellence) status the same year and SoLLaT accordingly proceeded to introduce dynamic and market-driven courses such as the B.A. degree in English for Professionals including plans to offer a programme in Literacy Studies.

Interestingly, the Universiti had taken the initiative to establish the International Literacy Research Unit (ILRU) in 2001 when it recognised the need to improve literacy practices through the generation of knowledge by creating a strong research culture and professional collaboration among researchers, teachers, policy reformers and educationists. The work of ILRU continues with renewed vigour under the aegis of SoLLaT.



Ambigapathy Pandian, spearheads literacy research in USM

Amby elaborated, "Partnering USM are the National University of Malaysia (UKM), Putra University Malaysia (UPM), Northern University of Malaysia (UUM), two Australian institutions viz. the University of Wollongong and James Cook University, and the International Development Asia Committee, a component of the US-based International Reading Association."

"The research partnership has just completed an action-oriented project funded by the Ministry of Science Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Malaysia, culminating in the development of fun-filled modules to assist teachers and students in science learning."

The project highlights environmental issues pertaining to science learning with the aim of improving approaches to science teaching and learning styles. "Science literacy promotes an understanding of diverse issues such as global warming, loss of biodiversity, evolution and genetic research that are important to a scientifically-based workforce," he said.



The ILRU office

"ILRU is committed to the promotion of high quality research to make learning and literacy more engaging and pragmatic," explained Prof Ambigapathy Pandian who has been involved with literacy research at USM over the last decade. Amby, as he is referred to by his colleagues, is the founding Dean of SoLLaT and has been collaborating with local and international institutions in articulating literacy movements in education and language development.



Students learning science through multimodal activities
(Photograph courtesy of SoLLat)



Teachers developing modules on science literacy
(Photograph courtesy of SoLLat)

Schools and respondents from five different states in Malaysia (Kedah, Kelantan, Pulau Pinang, Selangor and Sabah) collaborated in the project which focused on environmental conservation. The project involved over 2,100 participants.

In preparing the modules, teachers and project team members explored suggestions for creating more engaging lessons so as to increase interest among students towards the subject. The teachers also considered ideas for experiments, field trips and creative science projects. Students were then asked to give feedback on the completed modules, especially whether the lesson on Environmental Conservation was found to be interesting and effective.

“We discovered during the project that students rarely or never go for science excursions or any field trips,” Amby pointed out. “These students lacked exposure on how science works in the real world and were not encouraged to perform investigations outside the scope of the science syllabus.”

Hence the experience of field trips, hands-on investigations and laboratory experience proved to be meaningful as students began to appreciate real life applications and could better connect to the natural surroundings. The project prompted the teachers to engage in multifaceted teaching skills to help develop inquiring minds among students and their capacity to undertake life-long learning.



Science modules for Malaysian secondary schools

To improve science in schools, 48 ‘Sense about Science’ modules concerning environmental issues and conservation were created. The topics cover lessons on the rainforest, the conservation of energy and the greenhouse effect and global warming. The students were also taught about the application of the 3R’s (Reduce, Reuse and Recycle).

“Once completed, these modules were distributed to local schools to encourage ‘Community Knowledge Sharing’ and contribute towards creating a learned society,” Amby said. “Consequently, students are not only enriched by their understanding of science topics but could also engage in critical and analytical inquiry.”

The fact that modules were produced in English did not escape SoLLaT’s attention. The School plans to use its expertise to translate the modules so that this knowledge and research on science literacy can be shared with Bahasa Malaysia speaking learners as well as learners in Chinese and Tamil schools.

The science literacy project is but an example of USM’s quest to improve outreach and engage the community in tune with its APEX agenda. ■

Trust Credit on

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal
B. Sc. '07 Photographs by Yong Check Yoon

In 2009, the Women's Development Research Centre (KANITA) initiated a microcredit loan facility, Micro Pinj, for USM staff members with a take-home pay of RM2,000 and below. There are currently almost 4,000 members in this category, making up 40 percent of the total number of staff members at USM.

Micro Pinj is designed as a borrower-friendly facility which provides working capital for enterprising members of staff to start a small business or enhance an existing one. This is done with the aim of enabling them to increase their household income. The ongoing project headed by Prof Sukor Kasim has since benefited 32 USM members of staff. Of this number, 25 are from the Main Campus, five from the Engineering Campus and two from the Health Campus.



With the launch of this facility, USM became the first public university in the country to offer interest-free loans which do not require guarantors. The loans also do not require any down payment and do not carry any service charge. They are given out with the main objective of enhancing the socioeconomic well-being of low-salaried employees.

The project has witnessed a number of success stories. Mohd Nordin Ahmad, for instance, has been able to turn his business around with the loan. He operates a garden nursery in Guar Perahu, Bukit Mertajam and has seen his income increase by about 10 percent every three months. The loan has played a big part in this process of expanding his business.

"I used the loan to buy more plants, flower pots, soil with humus, and weedkiller for my existing business," he said, adding that the loan has also made it possible for him to start providing landscaping services to the main campus.

The Micro Pinj loan that Mat Desa Sidek obtained was used to upgrade his *tom yam* (a spicy soup originating from Thailand and Laos) restaurant at Medan Suri in Sungai Nibong, Pulau Pinang.



Kasinathan helping out at his wife's stall

"With the loan, I was able to make my restaurant more inviting and more conducive to dining by installing more lights and electric fans. I believe these improvements have led to an increase in the number of customers at my restaurant," Sidek said. "My business has probably gone up by 10 percent."

It is also possible to observe how innovative employees are when they are empowered to increase their household income. In the case of Kanageispariy M Govinda Rajoo, the loan given has enabled her to expand her recycling business in Sungai Dua in Pulau Pinang to supplement her meager income.


"I was able to buy more scrap metal and paper for recycling. However, instead of immediately selling them, I store them in my yard first and only sell them to the vendor when the prices go up," Kanageispariy explained. "The income is therefore seasonal, depending on how fast and how much the prices of these materials fluctuate."

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Danaletchimy Muniandy, a newspaper vendor who first started her business at Lebuah Mahsuri in Bayan Lepas, was able to set up a new stall distributing and selling newspapers in Taman Lip Sin with the loan she received. She stressed that it would not have been possible for her to set up the second stall if it had not been for the easy loan.

"I expect a 20 percent increase in profits with the opening of this new stall as there is a relatively huge population in Taman Lip Sin," Danaletchimy reasoned.

Perhaps Norsyafini Mohd Fuzi's business is the most innovative; producing homemade soaps. Norsyafini operates the cottage industry in Relau and she used to loan to acquire more chemicals and empty drums to produce her soaps. She also made use of the loan to purchase more attractive packaging materials for her soaps, which are marketed under the name 'Syafini Home-made Soap'. Her sales activity has improved significantly because she has been able to produce more soaps to meet the growing demand for such products.

The English writer Richard Whately said, "A man is called selfish not for pursuing his own good, but for neglecting his neighbor's". Through Micro Pinj, USM is perhaps making sure that its own people are taken care of in the best way possible. 



Kanageispariy's sister sorting out aluminium cans for recycling



BANISHED DREAMS

Jonathan Chen
B. Comm. '05

Photographs by B Vicknasingam

Malaysia is known for its cultural diversity, good food and white sandy beaches in some areas of the country. However, there is another area Malaysia is famous for: its laws on drug abuse, which are among the toughest in the world - to the extent of meting out a mandatory death sentence for drug traffickers.

It is understandable why the country views drug trafficking so seriously. Malaysia has a serious problem with drug users; approximately 1% of the Malaysia population has a problem with drug use.

Unsurprisingly, when aunts and uncles talk about crime over the dinner table, the conversation would end up trying to assign the culprits. Mention house-breaking, robbery and snatch theft and one would hear something like "Aiya, who else, it's the drug addicts-lah!"

While there may be some elements of truth behind these types of statements, it seems that drug addiction has now exploded into a full-blown social problem.

However, Assoc. Prof B Vicknasingam of USM's Centre for Drug Research (CDR) has differing opinions about the matter. To him, drug addiction is a health problem that is closely linked to the social environment. "I prefer to view drug addiction as a health problem and there is also a growing body of scientific evidence that is pointing towards this direction," he says.

"The only difference between drug addiction and any other health issue is that in the latter, the ailment only affects the person who is sick, whereas in the former, not only is the addict affected, their health issue becomes a social problem for his family members and community," Vicknasingam explains.



Assoc Prof
B Vicknasingam

Banished Dreams

"Furthermore drug addiction is a relapsing disorder, and in most cases there are relapses. Because of this, it is difficult to convince the public that it is a health disorder.

"After a few relapses, it is understandable that everyone, including family members of the drug addicts start to lose patience," he further explains.

Therefore, CDR has embarked on a long-term research effort to effectively combine medical and behavioural interventions to treat drug users. The findings from their research are then used by many local and international agencies, to formulate policies and interventions that are evidence-based.

CDR is also collaborating with Yale University to develop effective psychosocial intervention programmes and also conduct research in the area of experimental psychology to understand the social functioning of drug users.

"The problem is that the brain falls in love with opiates (drugs like heroin) very easily compared to other types of drugs, which makes it harder for an opiate addict to kick his habit," Vicknasingam explains.

Currently, the trend seems to be in the consumption of amphetamines-type stimulant (ATS) drugs such as 'ice' and syabu especially among the younger generation due to its perceived benefits like being able to lose weight and to stay awake and party all-night long. The down side of these drugs is that they can cause mental problems in about one to two years if used regularly.

"This is why educational intervention is important, as some users do not even know the dangers of simply consuming amphetamines," he said.

However, Vicknasingam says that Malaysia has come a long way in dealing with drug addiction by engaging the medical fraternity and initiating harm reduction programmes to reduce HIV infection rates among drug users.



Addicts hideout at garbage landfill site

While the traditional 'arrest and rehabilitate' is still the norm, more and more drug addicts who are receiving medical assistance such as methadone treatment and drug injectors are being enrolled in harm reduction programmes such as the needle exchange programme.

"For now, these programmes such as the needle exchange programme only help to curb or reduce HIV infection rates but does not cure the addiction.

These methods, however are the necessary starting point of a very long journey to wean drug addicts off the drugs.

"The end goal is to get these drug addicts to enrol in available treatment programmes," Vicknasingam says.

"The police and even certain religious groups have also responded positively to harm reduction programmes. We hope that we can see a significant drop in HIV and that families will be able to see their loved ones being drug-free.

"At the end of the day, we want to produce findings which are the building blocks for drug addicts to restore social and family functioning.

"Even though our harm reduction programmes are in their infancy, for us, once a drug addict chooses to move to a treatment programme, it is already a success. Once he stays clean for six months, it counts as a huge success," he added. **L**

Linking with Communities

Haslina Haroon
 Photographs courtesy of Orasa Awang

One perhaps cannot talk about the involvement of USM in community projects and initiatives without mentioning the important role played by the Division of Industry and Community Network.

The Division of Industry and Community Network was established within the USM Chancellory in September 2007 with the main aim of fostering closer and more meaningful ties and linkages with the world that lies beyond the campus, more specifically, the industry and the community.

Prof Lim Koon Ong, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Industry and Community Network) explained that while the University has been successful in engaging with the industries, especially where teaching and research are concerned, involvement with the community has been few and far between. He stressed that those few projects that were undertaken previously by members of the academic staff were more service-oriented in nature, involving mostly social and medical services.

Lim explained that with the granting of the status of Research University and more recently the APEX status, USM began to look seriously into the issue of the social responsibility of a university. It is believed that the university should go beyond its core mission involving the development of human resource and engage with the society at large.

Lim added that engagement here implies having shared understanding, and working together towards achieving mutual benefits and win-win results. In other words, engagement goes beyond outreach and extension of services. It is a process that requires the university to seek mutually beneficial relationships with communities in order to address the needs and the concerns of the communities. It is a two-way partnership which is guided by mutual respect among the parties involved.



From top: The flagship project, **Kelab Puncak, Kampung Sungai Batu Besi**; the launching of the coffee-table book *'Reaching out...Making THE Difference'*; *'River is for Keep'* project in Sungai Sedim; University-Community Engagement Conference (UCEC2009)

The community-based projects that have been undertaken and funded, either partially or wholly, by the Division of Industry and Community Network generally fall under five categories: education, economic enhancement, health, environment and heritage/culture. Details of some of these projects have been documented in a coffee-table book entitled *Reaching Out...Making THE Difference*. This book was officially launched by the Minister of Higher Education, Dato' Seri Mohamed Khalid Nordin on 4th October 2010.

It must be noted that the Division of Industry & Community Network has also taken the initiative to document industry-related activities that have been carried out by USM. Details of these activities can be found in a coffee-table book entitled *Journeying with the Industry...An Unwavering Commitment*, which was launched on 23rd November 2009.

While Lim acknowledges that much remains to be done where community-based projects are concerned, he is proud of the fact that four projects have been identified by the Minister of Higher Education as possible flagships projects which are slated to receive further support and attention from the University and perhaps the Ministry.

The first is "River is for Keeps: Sungai Sedim-Sungai Pinang Expedition" a capacity-building project initiated in 2008 by the School of Management and the School of Civil Engineering, in collaboration with UNESCO, with the aim of creating better understanding of environmental issues among the younger generation. Due to the overwhelming success of this project, it was repeated in 2009 with the theme "River is Life" and in 2010 with the theme "River is Love".

The second is the InsPIRE (Integrated System of Programmed Instruction for Rural Environment) project, the brainchild of the School of Educational Studies. This project, which began in 1997, aims to enhance the quality of education in rural primary schools, specifically those in the rural areas of the East Malaysian state of Sabah.

The project involving the Puncak Educational and Community Engagement Club in Bujang Valley is the third flagship project. Although this club was formed only in 2004, the project in Bujang Valley itself began in 1996, when Haji Romli Bakar, a former USM Deputy Registrar, established teaching and learning centres which provide free tuition, guidance and motivation to the local children. This club that was established in 2004 evolved out of the project initiated by Haji Romli. The club plans not only to continue and expand what Haji Romli had set out to do but also to identify and undertake sustainable economic activities which will be able to generate supplementary income to members of the local community.

The final flagship project from the National Poison Centre at USM is a community engagement initiative for health. It will focus on consumer health informatics.

Lim expresses hope that more members of staff at USM will come forward and not only participate but also engage deeply in community-based activities and initiatives. While their primary duties may revolve around teaching and research, academics must not lose sight of the fact they must also be socially responsible and sensitive to the needs of the community at large.

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Building Critical Mass

Artwork by Alec Chin



Yong Check Yoon Nor Rafizah Md Zain
Photographs by David Chew

For a healthy lifestyle, USM employees and the public have signed up at the newly opened Advanced Medical and Dental Institute (AMDI) FitnessLab at Bandar Putra Bertam on the mainland Pulau Pinang state. It occupies two levels of the shoptel building and is equipped with a complete range of exercise machines including treadmills, cycle ergometers, gym stations, free weights and audio-visual equipment valued at more than half a million Ringgit, according to Prof Rabindarjeet Singh.

This facility is part of the Healthy Lifestyle Cluster at the Advanced Medical and Dental Institute headed by Prof Rabindarjeet Singh.


“Sixty-two USM staff, 10 from the public and three secondary school students have since joined the FitnessLab and they are being guided by trainers,” FitnessLab coordinator Norhiman Ahmad said.

The FitnessLab also offers personalized exercise programme, guidance from qualified instructors, and programmes such as Pilates, Yoga and Shape-up are also available. He added that members of the gymnasium will be taught on the correct use of the equipment so as to gain maximum health benefits.

“We emphasise on enhancing health while toning and building of muscles are incidental to the gymnasium’s programme,” Rabindarjeet explained. The FitnessLab has facilities for shower, locker, and aerobics room.

“The FitnessLab can also be used for research to look at the effects of exercise in healthy aging, the role of exercise modalities in cancer rehabilitation, the role of various exercise modalities on rehabilitation or a researcher can design specific programmes using various equipment in the FitnessLab for rehabilitation or healthy lifestyle,” Rabindarjeet elaborated.

The FitnessLab has separate sections for female and male and members are provided with specific training or put on an individualised programme by American Council on Exercise (ACE) certified trainers.

“We are reaching out to our staff and students to inculcate a healthy lifestyle by exercising,” Norhiman said. It would also certainly be great if dedication can also pack critical mass of muscles to the body frame. Healthy body leads to healthy mind, added Rabindarjeet. 

Fitness Lab membership	Grade 41 staff and above	Staff below Grade 41 and USM Students
6 months	RM 60	RM 30
12 months	RM 120	RM 60

Bring along two passport size photographs and fees for enrolment.

*For enquiries from the public, kindly call:
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outside looking in

Maizakiah Ayu Abdullah
Photographs by Fairus Md Isa

As a Malaysian abroad, I follow my country's progress and development mainly through news articles and stories related to me by close friends and family. Having grown up in Penang, I may be a bit biased when I say that it appears as if USM stands out very clearly among all the public institutions in Malaysia. USM regularly makes headlines for its many achievements whether in research and development, or its bold leadership in innovative educational and outreach programmes.

Picture on top: Dzul visiting a child who underwent a cleft lip surgery in an Indonesian hospital by USM dental surgeons from the School of Dental Sciences, Kota Bharu.

As I clicked through online news articles about the university, I noticed that USM's accomplishments have a very significant recurring theme that is 'engagement' with the surrounding community. The university truly serves its community. USM's success as a reputable educational institution is demonstrated by how useful, applicable and constructive its programmes are for society.

At the helm of this achievement is the Vice-Chancellor, Prof Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak or 'Prof Dzul', as he is more commonly known by the USM community. Being a strong and compelling leader, Dzul exemplifies the university's ideals, principles and values. He leads by example. His leadership and voice also reach far out into the many threads of society through various other appointments. He is the current Vice-President of the International Association of Universities (a UNESCO affiliated organisation) and a member of the WHO's Expert Advisory Panel on Drug Policies and Management, to name a few. Perhaps the most popular of all are his weekly and fortnightly newspaper articles in the 'New Straits Times' and 'The Edge'.

These contributions cannot be understated. Through his newspaper columns, Dzul has the entire nation as his audience, and I, for one, never fail to find his writings fascinating, to the point and thought provoking. I can always count on Dzul to share interesting takes on current events or issues in Malaysia. For example, in his most recent piece on the reality TV programme 'IDEA: Malaysia Inventors' Challenge', he challenged the status quo by calling for a 'transformation' in classrooms to provide a more conducive environment for innovative and creative thinking. Another memorable piece last year was on how the demand to churn out employable graduates for the job market has clouded the objectives and drives of the education system in Malaysia. In all of his writings, Dzul displays a remarkable understanding of current issues, provides interesting analyses and offers solutions that would benefit all.

As an intellectual and educator, his main mission and cause are to improve and advance education. However, Dzul has made it apparent, time and time again, that the success of an education system should not be measured by rankings, student performance, or even employability of its graduates, but by how effective the system has been in improving the lives of mankind as a whole. He believes that education is not just about learning, but also about implementing and applying knowledge to uplift the lives of others, as well as nurturing a better and more sustainable future.

Dzul's commitments incorporate a larger, more pressing agenda and extend beyond the Malaysian community. Dzul maintains (and rightfully so) that in order for USM to be a global player in education, USM must commit to a global agenda. USM has resolved to do this is by aligning its APEX (Accelerated Programme for Excellence) objectives with the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals (MDG), that is to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor in a continually globalised economy. To achieve this, USM will utilise its expertise and resources, through 'multi and trans-disciplinary' approaches, to address the

needs of the "Bottom Billions" who are still beneath the world's poverty line. Dzul describes this as a concept where experts across disciplines, including end users, work together in order to achieve targeted results. Most importantly, this concept enables the bigger picture to be kept in mind and avoids overspecialisation that fails to achieve.

Dzul has set the stage for a new breed of thinkers. When I think of Dzul, I am reminded of the Dalai Lama's 'universal

responsibility'. We are living in a globalised community that has, in many ways, become smaller day by day. No community is in isolation. As lines of communication between different parts of the world increase, actions of any particular group can ultimately affect the rest of the planet. If we are to survive, this universal responsibility must be seriously taken up by all. Dzul has proven to be a great community leader with universal responsibility, who has been tirelessly paving the way for USM to be a socially responsible world class educational institution of the 21st century. 🏠



Tanjung Tuck

Under the Cashew Nut Tree

Yusuf Suid
B. Comp. Sc. '06

Photographs by Rusli Jamaluddin
and Yong Check Yoon



Fatimah draining the **laksa** noodles

Under the Cashew Nut Tree

Laksa ready to be served



Banana fritters and fried sweet potatoes are also available



I have always wondered how the famous *laksa janggus* (cashew nut laksa) of Kampung Perlis, Balik Pulau, got its name. Were grounded cashew nuts added into the spicy fish soup to be eaten with rice noodles?

The answer was provided by the owner of the *laksa* stall, Sham Othman, who started the business 19 years ago. He explained, "One day a customer had asked someone in the neighbourhood where the *laksa* stall was. He was directed to 'the stall under a cashew nut tree'. Hence, we decided to name the stall '*Laksa Janggus*'."

Owing to termites, several trees had to be felled some years ago. Only one remains under which a huge shade was built to shelter the tables for customers.

The *laksa* recipe is a concoction by both Sham and his parents-in-law. Fatimah Saad, Sham's wife, who co-owns the stall, prepares the spices for the gravy helped by two workers.

"We use 50 kg of fish, obtained from a regular supplier, to prepare the gravy for the 27 kg of noodles that would be served daily," Sham said. "These quantities, however, increase when we cater for functions."

Although popular for its *laksa*, the stall also offers *koay teow* (flat noodles) soup, banana fritters, rice with curries and drinks. For the convenience of their Muslim patrons Sham and Fatimah had a *surau* (prayer room) built behind the stall to enable them to perform their religious obligations. The stall opens daily, from 3.30 pm till 8.00 pm except on Wednesday. 🇲🇾

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Aid For Pakistan Flood Victims

The USM Postgraduate Students' Association (PSA) took up a collection at the Universiti's Al-Malik Khalid Mosque on 3 September to help the flood victims in Pakistan. The effort raised RM 1,535 which will be channelled through the Malaysian Red Crescent Society. It was jointly organised by the Institute of Postgraduate Studies and the Student Affairs and Development Division.



Wired Up

USM hosted a three-day Tech Insights Penang Symposium 2010 from 22 September at the Eureka Complex. The event was attended by over 200 representatives from various well-known local and multinational ICT companies.

YADIM Branch in USM

USM inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Yayasan Dakwah Islamiah (YADIM) on 28 September to ensure that research, publications and the dissemination of Islamic knowledge move in tandem with the advancement of science and technology in the country. To strengthen the objectives of the MoU as well as *dakwah* activities in northern Peninsular Malaysia, the USM Islamic Centre and YADIM are also expected to collaborate in the setting up of a YADIM branch within the campus.



Cycle for Life

With the participation of 80 students, a 1.5 km bicycle lane was launched on 29 September for the first time at the parade ground. The ceremony was held in conjunction with the 'Two Hours Without Vehicles' campaign on the main campus. The bicycle lanes will eventually cover the USM Stadium, Aman Damai Students' Residence and around the two lakes, Tasik Aman and Tasik Harapan.

A Given Voice

The Students' Representative Council (MPP) introduced a counter for students at the main campus to receive their opinions and complaints. The Students' Complaints Counter was opened at the lecture hall complex lobby for one-week starting 4 October.



Students' Parliament

The USM Students' Representative Council (MPPUSM) held its first Students' Parliament aka Students' Consultative Assembly on 23 October. Twenty motions were debated by 58 student representatives, including MPPUSM members and representatives of selected student bodies.

Alumni Dinner

A Northern Zone Alumni Dinner, organised by the USM Alumni Association, was held on the evening of 13 November at the Sunway Carnival Convention Centre in Seberang Jaya. The fun-filled event was attended by about 200 alumni and guests.



Community Health

A one-day community health programme was held at Kampung Jalan Tengku, Jelutong. The USM Pharmaceutical Sciences Society and the School of Pharmaceutical Sciences jointly organised the programme on 3 October to enable students of the School to reach out to the local community and carry out various health-related activities.

*Texts by Saw Cheang Kee, Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal and Yong Check Yoon.
Photographs by Fairus Md Isa.*



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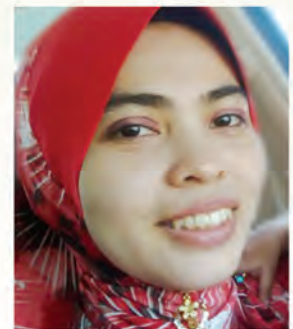
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*An honest yawn from the child despite the celebrative atmosphere during **Sirih Pulang ke Gagang 2010** (Photograph by Yong Check Yoon)*