



THE **LEADER**

MARCH 2011 Volume 6 No.1

ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF UNIVERSITI SAINS MALAYSIA

when
the
halls
are
SILENT

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Guest Contributors

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From the Chief Editor

I am back!

After much reflection, I realise I cannot leave *The Leader* just yet; too many ideas, too little time. Hope our readers too will continue to support us with mail, articles, photos, and face-to-face meetings and discussions.

In December 2010 *The Leader* editorial team had a full-day workshop to review our direction and capabilities. We smoothed out some policies and noted specific steps to be taken to improve *The Leader* while at the same time making efforts to cut costs, especially mailing.

One resolution from the workshop is to widen the coverage of our articles beyond Minden campus. Nothing really new, but just the same... In this respect 'Tanjung Tuck' has been renamed 'Foodwise' so as to enable us to cover food-related matters in and outside Pulau Pinang as well as to include other matters apart from just *makan* (eat).

However, writing about other USM campuses and the things of interest to their residents has been difficult in the past. This has been mainly due to the scanty feedback from these campuses. We hope, this time, alumni, students and staff from the Health and Engineering campuses will help us to improve this situation by contributing articles, news and photos. Do volunteer. On our part we will do our best to expand the scope of the various departments so as to make *The Leader* a true mouthpiece of Universiti Sains Malaysia.

We thank those who have replied to our survey of mailing preferences. I personally commend those who have boldly opted to read *The Leader* on-line. Of course we fully understand the sentiments of those who prefer to have the hard copies in their hands and show them to friends!

Keep in touch.



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Dzulkifli Abdul Razak
B. Pharm. '76

During my university days the vacations were fun in many ways. First, we could take a break from the 'hard' life of books and hassles of lectures. Second, it gave us time to explore new interests from what we learnt, such as engaging in voluntary social work and assisting in research projects. Third, by visiting and spending time with friends from different states or communities we were afforded opportunities to experience new environments.

Vacations were never dull. For the entrepreneurial-minded it was time to earn some pocket money. There were certainly many opportunities especially if one was thick-skinned, eager to ask questions and not afraid to make a 'nuisance' of oneself. If successful, one would have his or her first Kumpulan Wang Simpanan Pekerja (Employees' Provident Fund) account. Not bad!

I recall the days when a host of other pharmacy students and I volunteered to do a nationwide drug abuse survey project under the tutelage of Prof V Navaratnam (now Emeritus Professor Dato). The surveys ran from several days to weeks. During those outings we learned new 'soft skills' on our own initiatives. No need for the university to impose this or that competency because the system was autonomous and flexible enough to facilitate student acquisition of just about any new skill and competency. I dare say many were self-motivated exercises, not for money or grade.

Above all, our survey team learnt to live together. We tolerated each other's idiosyncrasies which turned out to be a priceless experience because eventually we became a closely knitted group that took care of one another. Needless to say, the group was truly '1Malaysia'sans the slogan since the practice was to promote unity and peace as vital elements for a multicultural Malaysia. USM had already been advancing UNESCO's fourth pillar of education, 'learning to live together,' way back in the '70s. Unfortunately, this invaluable part of education seems to be missing today.



*Students conducting fieldwork in the '70s
(Photograph courtesy of Perpustakaan Hamzah Sendut)*



*One of the two USM Land Rovers during a research trip in Kedah in 1973
(Photograph courtesy of Sharifah Munirah Syed Mohamed)*

The spirit of camaraderie that emerged from the experience of living together was not only confined to students. The drivers who accompanied us throughout the period of 'work' were also accepted as one of us, as if they were non-graduating students. One of them was Pak Hashim who became endeared to all and was an 'inclusive' member of the group.

Pak Hashim would drive the extra mile to hunt for an extraordinary food joint to keep the pack well nourished and merry. He would particularly do this on occasions when he sensed that the students were stressed, faced with burdensome chores, a rough journey, or character clashes that happened from time to time. The out-of-the-ordinary meals would turn into wind down sessions with everyone pouring out his or her frustrations and cracking jokes. The team spirit would perk up once again.

Since most of the time we shared affordable accommodations like youth hostels, the roughing out together and daylong sharing of experiences became sources of comfort. We grew 'wiser' with each passing day, more so when the 'vacationing' took us to undreamed of destinations, such as drug detention centres, prisons, and rehabilitation houses.


The drug addicts, especially, taught us to reflect upon how fortunate we were. The experiences gained were very humbling, the most valuable of which was their impact in shaping one's future philosophy of life. One realised that very often life was not fair. As a result, one developed empathy for the 'innocent' bystanders who unwittingly got caught in the intricate 'trap' of life. For some of us, that realisation has translated into a passion to prevent as many people as possible from falling into the same trap. We have naively thought education could be the final solution. Certainly, it is more complicated than that, we soon discovered.

But it was not until another vacation that I got more 'educated'. That was one experience which will stay with me forever. We were trying to produce an amateur video about the life of an addict, Jerry (not his real name). An on-off homeless, rehabilitated addict, Jerry was coaxed to be the leading actor. With the help from friends majoring in mass communication we wrote the script and directed the film at the Mount Erskine Chinese cemetery, in Pulau Pinang.

On several occasions, the shooting went right into the night because this was when Jerry practically lived, away from the spectre of society. Our imaginations were driven wild especially with the sound of howling dogs and other eerie noises. Yet, for Jerry they were part of his hallucinations and he seemed to enjoy them.

This was when I eventually learnt that education without action is basically useless. The question for me was how to transform 'education' to 'edu-action'?

It has haunted me till today, more so when I am leading the very university that has brought about this deep realisation in me, as a student, some 40 years ago. A realisation that began with a 'vacation' was a learning phase of a different kind.

University vacation is thus an indispensable part of life-long education that continues to enrich oneself, to be viewed with a more positive and challenging mind set. It is not fodder for more social problems. Seeing that the next academic session will, for the first time begin later in the year, in September, perhaps we need to revisit some of the experiences of past students and become wiser from them. 

*Mount Erskine Chinese cemetery, the location for the video filming
(Photograph by David Chew)*



@Anjung Budi



Persatuan Alumni USM AGM

Persatuan Alumni USM held its 15th Annual General Meeting (AGM) on 22 January. The AGM provided an important opportunity for younger members to interact with their seniors and many could be seen sharing views on contemporary issues. It was heartwarming to observe the spirit of camaraderie was very much alive among the audience. Dato' Syed Jamal Syed Jaafar (top picture, foreground) was elected President and Assoc Prof Mohamed Talhah Idrus, the Deputy President were among the 11 persons voted into the new executive committee for 2011-2013 during the AGM.

Guerilla Photography workshop

Professional photographer David Chew conducted a one-day workshop on 27 November 2010 about guerilla photography, a technique that allows a photographer to capture impressive images under the most difficult situations. This workshop was attended by eight participants who were later taken for a practical session on 11 December at Masjid Kapitan Keling, Pulau Pinang.



USM Jazz Band first AGM

Persatuan Alumni USM Jazz Band (AUSMJB) held its first Annual General Meeting on 30 December 2010 with the participation of 15 members. AUSMJB is currently tracking down members of AUSMJB of 1998 to 2010 and they can contact the Secretary, Fatin Osman at fatin.osman@yahoo.de or sign up at <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/ausmjb/> or Alumni USM Jazz Band in Facebook.

Garage Sale

A garage sale with 11 booths was held on 27 January peddling wares from old books to teddy bears. Also on sale were used clothes and freshly-baked cup cakes. This annual event attracted a cross-section of the campus community who steadily streamed in from 10 am until closing time at 4 pm.



Talk on Wasiat

On 10 February, Mohd Hairulazlan Ramlan presented a lunch talk on Wasiat (will) for Muslims. The one-hour event from 1 pm was attended by 31 persons.

Thank you for *The Leader*. It brings tears of remembrance to me looking at Desa Aman in 1978. Wonderful that you still have those pictures.

Prof Zabidah Ismail
B. Pharm. '81

I appreciate the effort made by the team in bringing back my past memories in USM though I admit I didn't know much of the places like the cendol stall and because I was not an adventurous type. I enjoyed my stay here since I have to really struggle to earn my degree in food technology (applied science). Happy New Year to all.

Nor Aliah Othman
App. Sc. '82

Thank you for the alumni magazine and it is nice to see the changes happening in USM after so many years. In support of your efforts to go green, I would like to receive future editions of *The Leader* in PDF format.

Dr Mohd Riduan Abdullah
M. D. '87

Thank you for sending the hard copy of *The Leader* magazine to me. From next issue onwards, I am opting to receive the magazine in PDF format. This is also in line with my own vision of preserving Mother Earth.

Choy Boon Ling
B. Soc. Sc. '91

Keeping touch... (Front row from right) Wong Swee Kit (B. Soc. Sc. '74), Esther Tan (B. Soc. Sc. '75), Joanne Wong (wife of Wong Ah Soo), (back row from right) Michael Phang Sow Yoong (B. A. '76), Chan Man Yen (B. Sc. '76), and Wong Ah Soo (B. A. '75) at a get-together dinner in Perth, Australia, on 10 Dec 2010.

Man Wong
B. Soc. Sc. '91



(Photograph courtesy of Man Wong)

Missing Pak Ani

Khalid Md Isa
B. Soc. Sc. '75

I came to know Tan Sri Ani Arope (also known as Pak Ani) during my tenure as the administrative officer in charge of the University Council in 1992 (renamed 'The University Board of Directors' in 1998) of which Pak Ani was the Chairman.

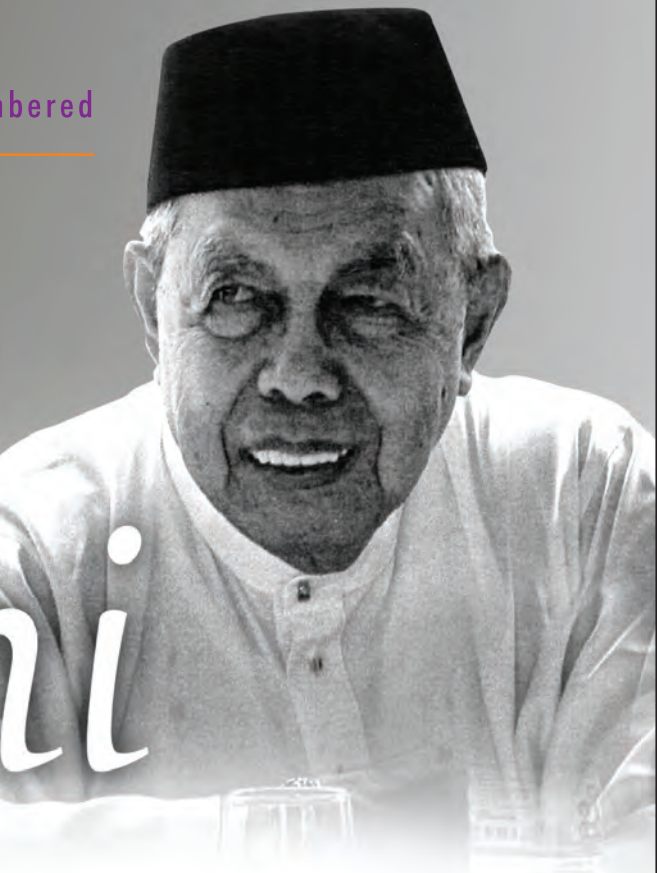
My task was to see to the transport and accommodations needs of the members.

What impressed me most about Pak Ani was his mastery over various languages. From his earlier childhood days which he spent in his mother's hometown of Pulau Tikus, Pulau Pinang, mixing with children of Chinese, Malay, Indian, Arab and Jewish descent he picked up their languages. He speaks Tamil (the language of the Indian Tamils) very fluently, *macam air*, (like the flow of water). He also speaks and writes in French for which he won an award.

One story has it that he was so good speaking the dialect of Kelantan (one of the states on the east coast of peninsular Malaysia) from his years as an agricultural officer there put him in good stead to negotiate with Dato' Nik Aziz, the Menteri Besar, regarding the construction of the Pergau hydroelectric dam when several earlier attempts had failed. At that time Pak Ani headed the Tenaga Nasional Berhad (National Energy Limited).

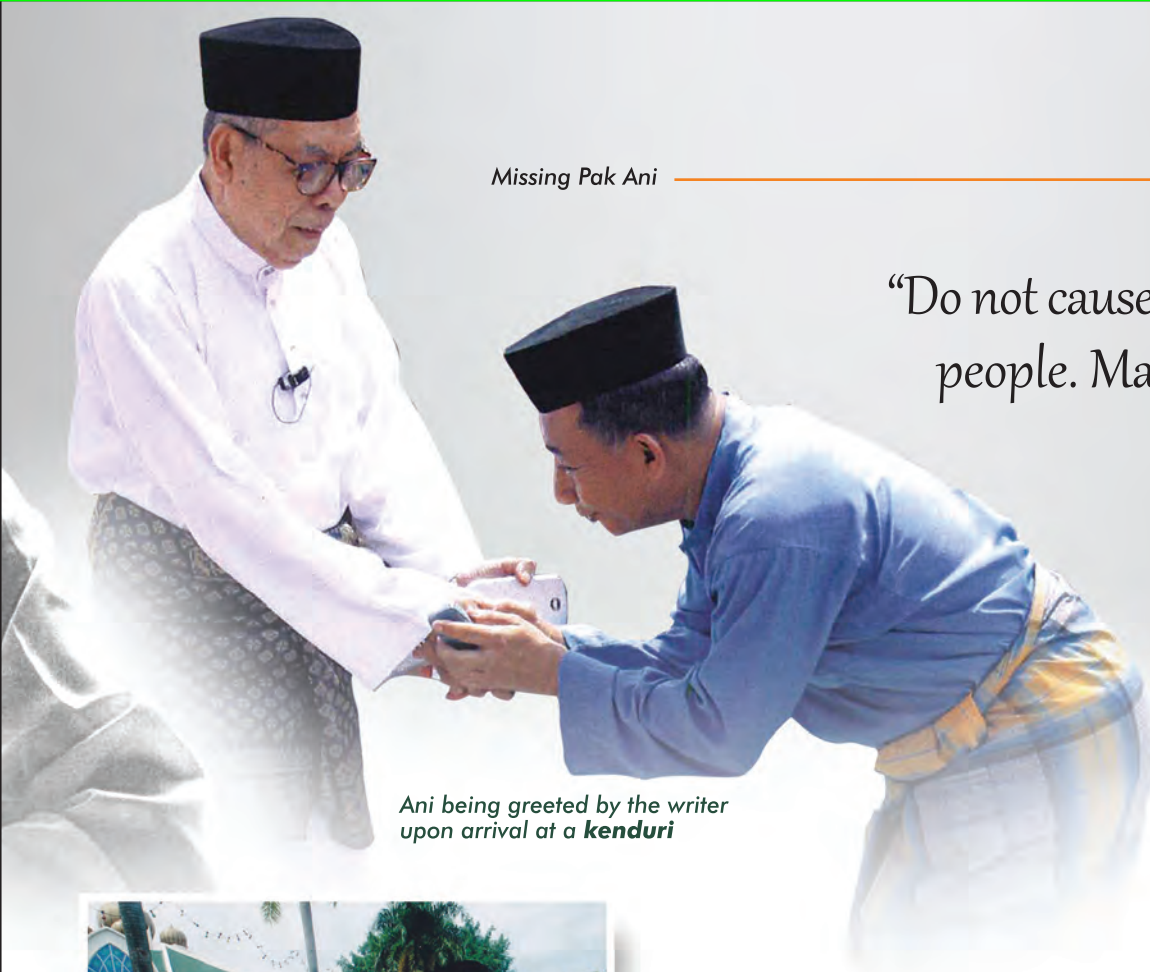
As the Chairman of the University Board of Directors Pak Ani would fly to Pulau Pinang from Kuala Lumpur to attend the meetings. His friendliness was evident in the way he greeted the airport staff who treated him like a celebrity. He would stop to chat with them.

As was his habit, after touching down in Pulau Pinang, Pak Ani would call his wife to inform her that he had arrived safely.



Pak Ani served as the Chairman of the University Board of Directors from 1998 to 2010

“Do not cause trouble to other people. Make no enemies.”
- Pak Ani



Ani being greeted by the writer upon arrival at a **kenduri**



Receiving the Chancellor for **iftar** (breaking of fast) at USM's masjid



Visiting the Health Campus in Kelantan
(Photograph by Che Engku Ramlah Che Engku Mat)


At the hotel the bell boys and the reception staff members greeted him with much pleasure. If a staff member was Japanese, Pak Ani would speak Japanese, to the former's amazement. Pak Ani's regular room was on the sixth floor. He especially loved the fried *kueh teow* (flat noodles) and the fresh coconut water at the Coffee Garden. For dinner I always brought him to Kayu restaurant for his favourite lamb curry.

The ease with which Pak Ani interacted with various sections of society was also evident in the instances when some academic staff members approached me to arrange for appointments to meet him to air their grievances.

Whenever he came to Pulau Pinang he would invite me to fly with him to the island of Langkawi which is close by.

He would kid me by saying, "The pleasure is mine, the risk is yours."

Born on 17 May 1932 in Province Wellesley (now known as Seberang Perai) he is the oldest licensed pilot in Malaysia. To retain his license Pak Ani has to go for a monthly medical checkup.

Although Pak Ani is no longer serving on the University Board of Directors, I shall always remember his advice, "Do not cause trouble to other people. Make no enemies." 

Conventional warfare training in Kelantan

Artwork by Alec Chin

NO TIME OUT

Alec Chin
B. Comm. '92

Photographs courtesy of
Mazlan Ibrahim
B. Sc. '92

Chin Poh Choy
B. A. '92

“Masuk Baris (in formation)!” bellowed the Regiment Sergeant Major (RSM) as his command broke the early morning silence. We, the ROTU (RESERVE OFFICER TRAINING UNIT) senior level cadet officers, automatically formed a three-company (a company consists of three platoons, each comprising of cadets from senior, intermediate and junior levels) parade at the car park of the School of Biological Sciences. This was followed by a short baca doa session by Cadet Officer Mohd Amin Husin, a soft-spoken gentleman from the north, only to be ensued by a lengthy briefing by the then Chief Instructor, Major Hj Abdul Aziz Hj Pawanchik.



The still air was filled with diesel fumes from the ‘humming’ three-ton army trucks standing by to ferry us to our destination. For this exercise, the battleground was a tract of virgin rainforest along the East-West Highway in Kelantan. At that moment, as I recall, anxiety set in as my mind whisked away to the unknown wilderness.

That was in early November, 1990. While most of the students had gone home to enjoy their semester break, we, on the other hand, had to perform our duties as soldiers and commanding officers in a two-month long ‘conventional war’. Described as an open confrontational war where forces of each side are well-defined, the simulated war game happened deep inside the thick forest while being pounded by monsoon rain and heavy ‘enemy’ (posed by the regular army unit) shell fires.

As in the virgin forest where everything is scarce, we made do with whatever we were equipped with; to set up the command base, bunkers and communication trenches. We were also expected to strategise and launch counter attacks while at the same time raise and maintain the platoon’s morale and to ensure the team’s survival. All in all, similar to an actual army situation in a war zone, if not, pretty close enough.

‘Kidnap’ scenarios, where a troop is ambushed and taken hostage, happened a few occasions during jungle manoeuvres, with our rations and weapons snatched by the ‘enemy’. We ended up receiving hefty punishments, both from the ‘enemy’ and the instructors, as appropriate reminders of the serious consequences of our mistakes.

Other than human encounters, the constant company of wild bees, fire ants, leeches and mosquitoes amidst tons of unknown poisonous insects and plants had not only made our stay challenging but ironically enjoyable. One of us even had to be ‘grounded’ throughout the whole time due to a knee infection caused by poisonous plants.

From top: Building communication trenches with ‘Sergeant’ Chong (left) looking on; Mazlan Ibrahim in a mortar-firing training session; the writer (standing) in an ‘order delivery’ session instructed by Captain Sujit Gupta Dupta (seated)

From top: On top of a bunker, (seated from left) Chin and Afendi, (standing from left) Zulkifli, Ibrahim, Seek and Raj; (from left) Mazlan, Chin and Amir in pistol firing session instructed by Elias (in red beret); wrapping-up the last annual camp, prior to being commissioned as Second Lieutenant in military reserve force; a reunion durian party in Chin's house in Kulim, July 2009

Injuries were unavoidable in an environment full of uncertainties. I recall a tense moment when I fell victim to a 'delayed' misfire during a hand grenade-throwing practice. I was immediately dispatched to a nearby *pusat kesihatan* (government clinic), only to receive a comprehensive medical treatment by the attending medical personnel. Except for the pain, this traumatic episode eventually turned out for the better. The care and concern from my fellow cadets and instructors had not only made this incident one of the most memorable but also made me realise how blessed I am to belong to this close-knit corps.

Beside those infrequent trips into the jungle, regular weekend activities were more mundane. Back in campus, every Saturday meant a full day (6 am to 6 pm) of military trainings, which sometimes stretch to Sundays for extra lectures on warfare theories. Weekend nights out were an ultimate luxury then. As a cadet officer, life in campus was split between being a civilian and a military officer. Achieving a perfect balance between the two lifestyles was an uphill task. For some, the strenuous and regimented practices had not only deprived them of their deserved weekend and semester breaks, but had also taken a toll on the academic performances.

Every semester break was taken up by the 'Intensive Training' (one to two weeks during inter-semester break) and the so-called 'Annual Camp' (one to two months during year-end break). It was then when our ability to withstand extreme pressure, to make prompt decisions amidst hostile environment and to apply knowledge of tactical strategy was put to test. Some of us broke down to the brink of giving up from the intense pressure, but thanks to the solid comradeship among the cadets and guidance from the instructors, we managed to pull through.

No pain no gain; thinking back, I had missed out on some of those precious moments with my coursemates, especially when I had to rough it out in the jungle while they were enjoying their year-end holidays. But I had gained so much more in return. The knowledge, experiences, and most important of all, the comradeship, which will last a lifetime. 🇲🇾





On the peak of Phu Chi Fa
with our local friends

“AN EXCHANGED” LIFE

Text and photographs by
Tey Yi Shen
Tan Peck Hoon

"Sawatdee kha"

Greetings from Mae Fah Luang University (MFU), Chiang Rai, Thailand. We are two USM students who are fortunate enough to be selected to come here and study for one semester under the Malaysian-Indonesian-Thailand (MIT) Mobility Student Exchange Programme. MFU is known as the 'University in the Park' and rated as the university with the most beautiful campus in Thailand. So here we are, from the 'University in the Garden' to the 'University in the Park'!

MFU is located in the northernmost province of Thailand and close to the infamous Golden Triangle bordering Laos and Myanmar. With its beautiful rolling hills and abundant wild flowers, the campus landscape makes MFU one of the tourist attractions in Chiang Rai. It is such an enjoyment to walk around the campus, appreciating the beauty of nature. The site that attracts both of us the most is the spectacular garden, with its star-shaped design, located at the center of the university. The statue of the King of Thailand's mother, H.R.H. the Princess Mother, from whom the university is posthumously named after, is placed in the middle of this garden. Although she was fondly referred to by the Thais as *Somdej Ya* (the Royal Grandmother), the people of northern Thailand, especially the hill tribes, affectionately refer to her as *Mae Fah Luang* (Royal Mother from the Sky) because she always landed in their villages from the sky (by helicopter)! So now you know what the name of the university means.

We arrived here in early November 2010. The moment we stepped out of the Chiang Rai International Airport, we were met by *Phee Ngew* and *Phee Gam*, two international affairs officers from MFU. (*Phee* is like the Malay language *abang/ kakak* and it is used the same way). We were briefed about the university, the upcoming activities as well as certain procedures and formalities. The two *phees* gave us a very warm welcome and a very nice first impression. They made us feel immediately at home. We were taken straight to our accommodation on campus and just imagine us, when we saw our rooms at MFU's International

House! Each room was equipped with an attached bathroom with a water heater. There was also a small pantry with a refrigerator and a microwave oven.

We had no problems making friends with the local students but we were initially confused by their names. Each and every Thai has a real first name and a nickname. Although the latter has a certain meaning (such as water, money, finger etc.), it does not relate to the real name at all! It is interesting but can be quite confusing. The Thais prefer to call each other by nicknames, even lecturers and professors. The students here call all lecturers *ajarn* (teacher), regardless of their positions; for example, we call Dr Phunsiri (her real name), our Food Microbiology lecturer, *Ajarn Oy* (her nickname). Like our Thai friends, we feel closer to the lecturers when we address them that way.

The official teaching medium here is English, but sometimes the *ajarns* will also use the Thai language for further explanations to help local students. This is as an opportunity for us to improve our command of the Thai language. We have neither tutorial class nor study week here. However, these do not burden us because assessments are divided into midterm and final term examinations. Another interesting regulation here is that it is compulsory for all undergraduates (including us) to wear the university uniform to classes. All of us look like school students again! Yet we like it as we don't have to waste time everyday thinking of what to wear and whether our attire is proper for classes.



The star-shaped garden at the centre of MFU



EVT, the eco-friendly campus transporter



The Wednesday night market



With our classmates at the night market

The facilities in MFU campus are quite different from those in USM in many ways. Here, we travel around the campus in EVT (Electronic Vehicle Thailand) that looks like the golf buggy. It is environmentally friendly because it runs on electricity, free of noise and does not emit smoke. There are various kinds of food including *halal* options available on campus. Chiang Rai produces abundant agricultural products throughout the year so prices of food are quite cheap; for example, three steamed sweet corns cost only THB10 (around RM1.00). Honestly, we are very happy as it saves us a lot on living expenses. Canteens here are very clean and meet health requirements. Most of the caterers wear proper attire (aprons, masks, gloves and hair covers). Rice cookers with water constantly boiling in them are always available near the cutlery areas so that we can sterilise our forks and spoons by dipping them into the hot water.

In Malaysia, students usually look forward to Fridays and the weekends. Here, we love Wednesdays because there is a night market on campus. There are delicious foods, daily necessities, beautiful clothes and accessories on sale in colourful stalls. The university also allows students to set up their own stalls so that they can earn extra pocket money as well as gain entrepreneurship skills.

So far, besides studying, we also joined other activities such as games and day trips organised by the university, as well as participated in the *International Conference on Agriculture and Agro-Industry (ICAAI) 2010*. We travelled around Chiang Rai and other parts of northern Thailand with our new friends. We had a gloriously wonderful time celebrating New Year's Eve and the *Countdown 2011* with our Thai friends at a stadium in Chiang Mai, 180 kilometres away from MFU campus, watching the *We Are One* concert and the *International Fireworks Display & Contest*.

We have acquired new knowledge, improved our communication and adaptability skills and gained invaluable experiences living in a different environment and culture. All these cannot be gained through books and in classes back home. We are so fortunate to be selected to come to this beautiful land with its super friendly people. We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those in USM, whose participation made it possible for us to be in this exchange programme. To all my Thai friends, *khop khun kha* (thank you). This one semester with you will be a wonderful memory that will last a life time for us. 🇹🇭

It would not be an exaggeration to say that all students look forward to the three-month break at the end of every academic session at the university. Students generally take advantage of the break to unwind, sit back, put their feet up and take a breather. While it is safe to assume that local students will generally head back home for some much-needed rest, much less is known about what our foreign undergraduates do during the long break. *The Leader* managed to catch up with one foreign undergraduate to ask him about how he spends the long university break.

Jason sometimes explores on his bicycle

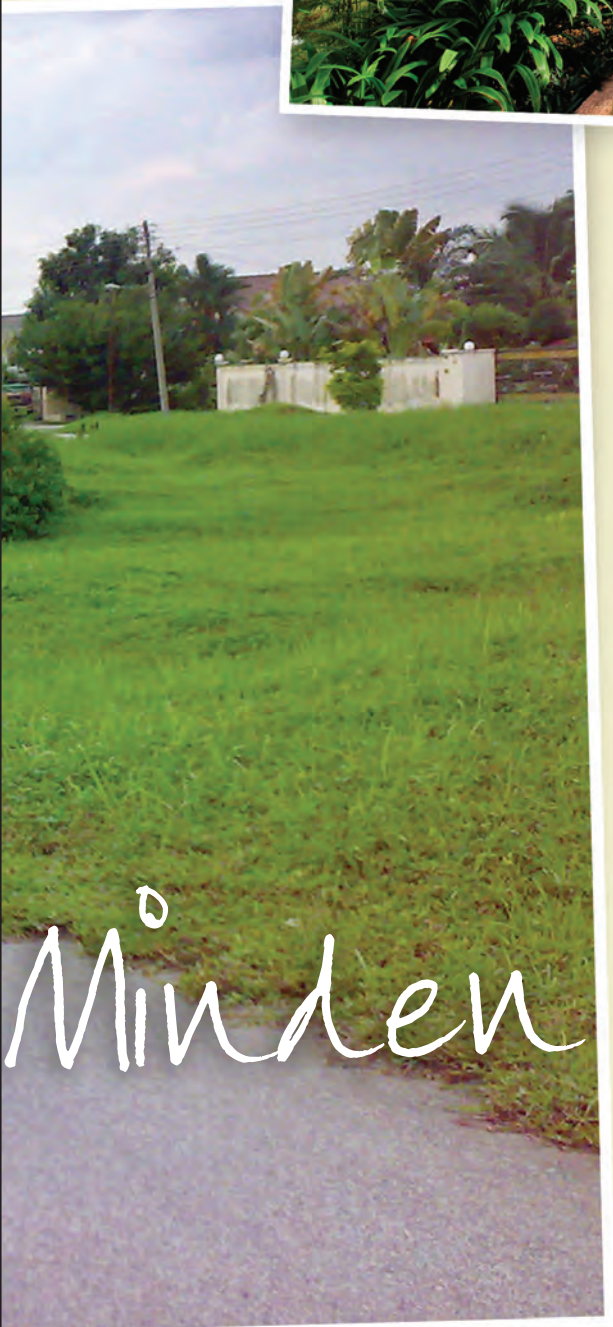
I left my heart in

Haslina Haroon

I Left My Heart in Minden



*School of Humanities
(Photograph by David Chew)*



Zhan Guangchen comes from China and is currently studying for his BA in English Language and Literature Studies at the School of Humanities. Fondly known as Jason by his lecturers and friends, he told *The Leader* that throughout his three-year stay in Pulau Pinang, he has spent only one long break in Malaysia. Because of the relatively short distance between the two countries and the availability of reasonably-priced air tickets to China, he finds that it is more convenient to go back to China during the long break. According to Jason, many of his fellow friends from China who are studying at USM also return to China during the long break because of the same reasons.

"China is still home to me. I prefer to return to China and spend time with my parents and the rest of the family during the long break", tells Jason.

Jason said that the three years he spent in Malaysia so far has been nothing but wonderful. He also proudly declares that Malaysia is now his second home. Giving credence to this claim is the fact that he has also acquired a Malaysian girlfriend during his stay in Malaysia. Jason, however, admits that he often finds himself yearning for the comforts of home and longing for the familiar.

"No place can ever substitute the place where you come from. I enjoy every bit of my time in Malaysia, but most of the time I miss my hometown and wish that I was back home".

Jason, however, adds, "I always think of going back home when I am in Malaysia. It is ironic that every time I am back home, I always find myself thinking of my second home". His eyes twinkled with amusement when we suggested that perhaps he was thinking of the girlfriend that he left behind.

I Left My Heart in Minden

Jason also added that despite having gone back to China during the long break almost every time since he's been in Malaysia, the one long break he spent in Malaysia is one that he will always remember. Jason says that the decision he made to remain in Malaysia during that time was done for practical reasons.

"The first long break I took in Malaysia was from May to July 2008. I made the decision not to go back to China at that time because I had just completed the Intensive English programme offered by the Centre for Languages and Translation. I was about to start my major and I wanted to familiarise myself with the campus before I embark on my studies".

Jason spent that long break getting to know the campus and other facilities which he knew he would be using or going to once the semester got under way. This includes the library, the administrative offices, the school, the lecture halls and major eateries.

"I wanted to be fully prepared for the new semester and for my new life as a student at USM. I borrowed as many books as I could so that I could get a head start over other students" Jason says.



Vacations provided him the opportunity to travel to Petaling Street, Kuala Lumpur

He was, however, quick to add that once he had done the necessary preparation, he began to travel to get to know the country. Jason recounted that the first few places he visited were Ipoh, Genting Highlands and Kuala Lumpur.

Jason remarked that he particularly enjoyed learning about the history of Pulau Pinang. Through friends, Jason also got to know about Petaling Street in Kuala Lumpur. A trip to the capital city brought him to the centre of Kuala Lumpur's original Chinatown. He certainly was not disappointed by what he found at the most happening night market in Malaysia.

"I enjoyed getting to know other places in Malaysia. Travelling around Malaysia was a real eye-opener for me. I got to see new places, meet new people and learn about so many different cultures".

Jason said that with hindsight, he probably should not have gone back too often.

"Students who have entered university should not be reliant on their parents anymore. They should take it as an opportunity to learn about themselves and about the wider world outside their own country", said Jason wistfully as we parted ways. 📖



Protecting his girl friend with a musket near Captain Francis Light's statue at Pulau Pinang Esplanade

Some Gain, Some Lose

Text and photographs by
Hamima Dona Mustafa
B.A. '73

When Ch'ng Kok Seong (better known as Ah Kok) began operating the food stall at the alumni house, Anjung Budi, one and a half years ago business was encouraging.

Located close to the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation (SoLLaT), Ah Kok's stall opened Mondays till Fridays, from 9.00 am to 5.00 pm.

He made brisk business, taking in an average of RM 450, when SoLLaT held intensive language courses. During breaks, international students, especially those from China, would queue to place their orders. They selected from a list of offerings: *char koay teow* (fried flat noodles), *bee hoon* (round thin white noodles), *mee* (yellow noodles) cooked in chicken broth, and fried rice. A popular dish, a plate of white rice with chicken, soy sauce egg and vegetables sells for RM 4.

Ah Kok maintains his cheerful disposition despite the rush to fulfil orders

Some Gain, Some Lose

If Ah Kok's and the doughnuts' stalls are examples of small individual business ventures, 24-hour Restoran Khaleel located outside the main entrance to the students' housing complex boasts of five other outlets scattered at various places on Pulau Pinang. This Bukit Gambir outlet, closest to campus, employs 22 staff members from India and Bangladesh.

According to cashier Mohamad Kabeer from Chennai, India, who has been working at the restaurant for the past eight months, the university's semester break did not affect the restaurant's business. With events such as the intensive off campus programmes, business was satisfactory.

"To get away from the campus canteen atmosphere students come to Khaleel to relax," Mohamad Kabeer said.

The menu promises an assortment of rice and curry dishes, 15 noodle choices and 26 types of non-alcoholic beverages.

The examination period brought substantial crowds at night.

After midnight other types of customers patronised the restaurant.

On an average daily earnings amount to RM 3,500 with the students spending RM 5.

Friday is normally a slow day, with the maximum of 15 plates of noodles sold. At 3.30 pm it is time to pack up.

"Come semester break wa susahlah (I face difficulties)" sighed Ah Kok. "Located away from student dormitories, there was less business for me."

This, however, was not the case with the doughnut stall situated in the cafeteria within the *desas* (student dormitories complex) of Restu, Saujana and Tekun. Although the students, about 4,400, have vacated the dormitories during the break, the rooms were occupied by participants of inter-university sports events and the annual intensive courses for off campus students.

According to Abdul Rahim Abdul Shukor who has worked at the stall for seven months, during the recent intensive courses, the doughnuts which sell three for RM 1 raked in RM 600 a day, double that of an average day's taking during semester time, with opening hours from 10 am to 11 pm.

Mohd Khairi Abu Bakar, another assistant, observed that it was only during the fasting month that the doughnuts did not sell well, earning as little as RM 15, because there was tremendous competition from the *pasar Ramadhan* or Ramadhan market, set up by the local city council at the main entrance to the dormitory complex. Since the food market operated only during the fasting month the students took the opportunity to try out the offerings for a change.



Abdul Rahim serving his customers



Mohamad Kabeer's daily routine

Campus Life

Some Gain, Some Lose

Another example of good business despite the semester breaks was the copier machine outlet, Smart Xerox, situated in the desas Restu, Saujana, Tekun complex. According to Farah Atikah Azhar, a final year New Media student from the Pusat Pengajian Seni (School of Arts) who works part-time at the shop business was good during the intensive programmes for off campus students.

Manager Hasina Abdul Rahim chipped in, "There was hardly a moment to sit still. We have as many as 200 students to attend to."


She added that meal time, from 6 pm to 7 pm, was the busiest time of the day.

This is understandable because the off campus courses are taken mostly by working people who are required to be on campus for a period of three weeks. Hence,



Farah (right) of Smart Xerox

the copier machine is a life saver. One makes copies of the relevant reading materials to help produce term papers and to prepare for the final examination.

Undoubtedly, one's location on or around the campus, the availability of intensive course offerings and the business one is engaged in do impact one's business earnings during the semester break. For Ah Kok, he is hopeful that when the semester resumes long queues of international students will form again, waiting to savour his rice and noodle dishes. 

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





ABD KHALID JAAFAR



ABD SHUKOR
ABD HAMID



ABDOL RAZAK SALEH



ABDUL HALIM SANOT



ABDUL RAZIF
ABDUL RAZAK



AGNES TAN YAO MAY



ALFRED KHOO POH HIN



AMIRULLAH MOHD
ARSHAD



ANUAR MD YASIN



CHE ZAHIDAH ZAINUL



CHONG SENG FOOK



EW CHAI HUYOK



FAIZAL RASHID



FARAIZAH KARIM



FATIMAH A MAJID



FATIMAH AHMAD



FAUZIAH HANAFIAH



FAUZIAH JAYA



HANIM ZAKARIA



HASHIM BUJANG



HASSIMAH IBRAHIM



HENG IT BIN



ISKANDAR IBRAHIM



JAFRI MALIN ABDULLAH



KEE SWE E ANN



LAU ING SOO



LEONARD ASHLEY
OLIVEIRO



MAZLAN MOHD



MELOR MOHD
MANSOR



MOHD NASIRUDDIN
JOHARI



MOHD YUSOF ISMAIL



MURALI MOHAN
CK GOPINATHAN



NGAU YEN YEW



NIMI SARINA NORDIN



NORHIZAN ISMAIL



NORLIZA BAHARIN



NURJAHAN MOHD
IBRAHIM



ONG KEE THENG



OTHMAN SULEIMAN



ROGAYAH SHAMSUDIN



ROHANA HANAFI



ROSLY AHMAD



RUZINI AB BHANI



SABARIAH TAJUDDIN



SALIMAH OTHMAN



SUIB ISMAIL



YUSOF HASHIM



ZAHARAH NOORDIN



ZAKARIA A KADIR



ZULKIFLEE OSMAN

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

WHERE DO the Birds Sing?

Artwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

♪ "Where do the children play?" ♪
Cat Stevens, Tea for the Tillerman, 1970

Where Do The Birds Sing?

The attitude of campus residents and inconsiderate land development need to be rechannelled so as to be sensitive to the plight of other residents as is being done in other countries



*The **Cicak Kubin** (flying gecko) is less seen over the past year*



*This caged **Merbah Jambul** could be purchased for RM 500*

The sight and sometimes sound of starlings crashing into buildings (which have 'suddenly' appeared in their flight paths) are slowly becoming uncomfortably common around November to February, during their migration season. Whether we realise it or not, our modifications to the environment are gradually coming into conflict with the other residents.

Just as human-made structures have displaced playgrounds and open spaces, they have also encroached upon the 'homes and playgrounds' of the other residents. It must, however, be noted that while the loss of children's play areas are often defiantly challenged, the loss of and modifications to the spaces of the other residents are sadly overlooked and generally downplayed by the public.

The replacement of green spaces with buildings and structures have forced birds (and other residents) to retreat to other forests. This, coupled with bird poachings, have resulted in the extinction of some species in USM. Keen observers would not hesitate to say that the beautiful song of the Merbah Jambul (Crested Bulbul) is slowly becoming a distant memory.

Where Do The Birds Sing?



With the disappearance of predators, the caterpillar population may increase

Much of USM's wetland areas, a prolific ecosystem supporting a variety of wildlife and birds, have been concretised. Hundred-year-old coconut palms planted by one of Pulau Pinang's earliest millionaires, Yeap Chor Ee, are slowly disappearing. Streams have been redesigned into drains while forested patches are being turned into orchards and gardens.

These changes in the ecosystem have consequently affected the kinds of other residents found in the campus. The reduction of wetlands has resulted in a marked decrease in the varieties of *pucungs* (herons) and *pekakas* (kingfishers). The *Repang* (Golden Plover) too has not been seen for a while.

The disappearance of coconut palms also took away with them the *belatuks* (woodpeckers). The last time I saw a *Belatuk Pinang* (Copperback Woodpecker) was probably 19 years ago! Other birds such as *takors* (barbets) and *Tiongs* (Dollar Birds) which would dig out holes and nest in tree hollows are also less sighted now with the diligent slayings of 'dead' trees.

Hornets nesting in proximity to humans pose a safety problem



A male **Belatuk Pinang**

Though almost 'extinct' in USM, the migratory **Repang** can still be sighted in Pulau Pinang

Where Do The Birds Sing?

The Durian Valley is the largest patch of forest in the Minden campus and should be preserved as it is



While the **Pekaka Udang** (bottom) is still faithful to its original diet, the **Pekaka Ikan** has resorted to other available prey




The nests of **Merbah Kapur** can be quite easily found near campus buildings



Modifications of slopes and embankments have prevented *burung angins* (barbets) and *pekakas* (kingfishers) from having a choice nesting sites. The latter is not even a true kingfisher anymore, now feeding on grasshoppers, centipedes and even the young of other birds. These have replaced their original diet of fish and crustaceans which were once plentifully available in the wetlands.

These physical changes in land use, however, have not undermined the 'popularity' of USM as a good habitat for other species. The *Mala Kerbau* (Common Mynahs), *Cak* (House Sparrows), *Walit* (Barn Swallows), and *Merbah Kapur* (Yellow-vented Bulbuls) are still very much at home no matter how drastic the changes in their environment have been affected. It is also often overlooked that USM may be the only site hosting the much protected *Murai Batu* (White-rumped Shama). The *Pucung Kuak* (Night Heron) has also adopted Tasik Aman (Lake Aman) as its official residence.

We need the presence of these other residents to control pests, adding pleasing colours and melodious sounds to our environment. Hence their homes and playgrounds need to be properly safeguarded through more bird-sensitive physical plans. It is thus very important to remind ourselves that, each time we plan for a particular activity or design our children's playground, we are not intruders of their environment; we are their cohabiters trying to share it sustainably. 



TRAILER

Come Together

Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA) will be holding a *Come Together* dinner concert on 24 September at a major hotel in Pulau Pinang to launch the Alumni Foundation Fund. Tabula Rasa, USM's first rock band, will be headlining the event in conjunction with their 40th anniversary.

Balikampus 2011

For the first time, *Balikampus* will be held at the Health Campus in Kubang Kerian, Kelantan on 9 - 10 December. Look out for further updates in *The Leader* and our webpage alo.usm.my.

Premier League Soccer

USM fraternity can watch its home team playing in the Premier League on its own turf in a series of matches as scheduled below:

USM FC Matches from April to July 2011

Date	Time	Team	Venue
4 April	8.45 pm	Sarawak	USM Stadium
15 April	8.45 pm	Sime Darby FC	USM Stadium
18 April	8.45 pm	Majlis Perbandaran Muar FC	USM Stadium
22 April	8.45 pm	Sinar Dimaja/TLDM	USM Stadium
6 May	8.45 pm	Johor	USM Stadium
9 May	8.45 pm	ATM	USM Stadium
20 May	8.45 pm	Harimau Muda 'B'	USM Stadium
29 July	8.45 pm	Pos Malaysia FC	USM Stadium

COURT-LY Recollections

Text and photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin

The old tennis court in early '70s
(Photograph courtesy of PTPM USM)



inden campus is not only the biggest and oldest army camp on the island, it also has a number of 'secret' spots, each with a story to tell.

One such locale lies somewhere to the south-eastern edge of the campus' coconut grove. The secluded place is 'frozen' in its own time dimension while the world whizzed by.

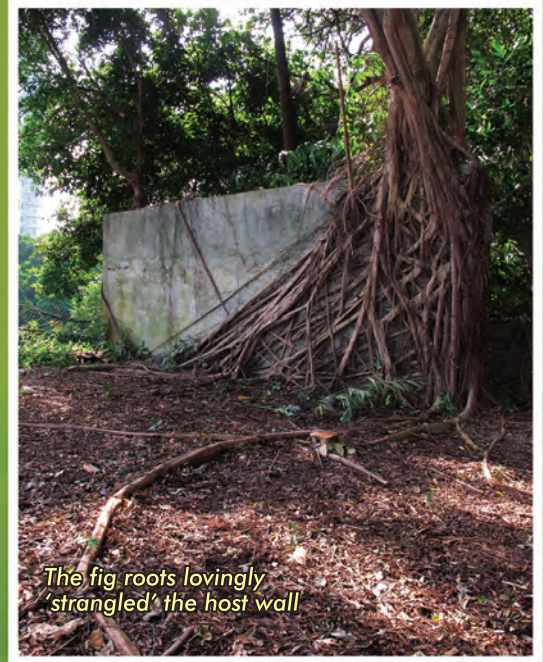
Ali Baba's magical words "Open Sesame!" conjures the magical scene from the famed *Ali Baba Bujang Lapok* movie: a door sliding away to allow him access into a cave, all because of the secret words. This tale intensely captures our imagination that the magical phrase "*niat nyinson mata kaji, semar nyisen*" has become a humorous way to announce our presence at an entrance. The mystical veil is lifted from the old Minden tennis court as you stand before it without even uttering any magic word.

Sustaining Heritage

Court-ly Recollections



View of the tennis court from the sports gymnasium car park



The fig roots lovingly 'strangled' the host wall



The strangler fig growing out of the remaining tennis drill wall

If one were to ramble across Minden Zone D, one may probably pass by an abandoned tennis court tucked away on a knoll surrounded by shady groves and fields. Jungle vines and undergrowth had invaded its grounds, practically camouflaging the tennis lawn. What remains of once a tennis drill wall stands with a strangler fig tree wrapping its roots around the ruins lovingly but slowly breaking up the bricks and concrete in the process. These are the remaining clues that hint us of what the place formerly was.

Old records showed that the court numbered as "167", with an original footprint of approximately 16,000 sq ft area. Half of the court land area had been acquired by the State Government for constructing the Penang Bridge expressway "EXIT 3602B" in the early '80s. As seen today, the court resembles a 'balcony' that perches on the edge of craggy escarpment that plunges to Jalan Sultan Azlan Shah hugging the contour of the knoll. Its location at the isolated spot in the university endowed it with an air of sanctity.



Remnants of the drill wall and part of the camouflaged court (foreground)

As with many desolated places, it evokes a strange feeling of surreal emptiness and there is no surprise that there are rumours of people experiencing strange feelings of being watched or tailed even when there is no one else is around. The presence of the strangler fig aggravated that nagging feeling even more. There are local beliefs of how the 'evil spirit' in a strangler fig can possess a human body and I asked my well informed park keeper if that could be the reason why visitors are no longer coming in droves.

"*Mana ada...where got?*" Pak Uda, the park keeper replied in halting English. "*Where got hantus (ghosts)? I've never heard.*"

He said that the spot was in fact popular with courting couples. Even then romance took a back seat when other new recreational pursuits in the campus were available to students. In fact that massive strangling fig is a silent witness to the years of events transpired in the area as its branches and canopy of leaves offer shade to students and joggers passing by who turned it into their 'pit stop'. Ironically it, too, offer shade to the old abandoned tennis court from the harsh sunlight although stealthily the penetrating roots damaged it in the process.



Maintenance work at the former court



Expressway EXIT 3602B




Expressway Exit 3602B
(Source: www.maps.google.com.my)



A shady respite from the sun

Numerous avian residents have made it their transitory stopover for shelter and fruits. For bird watchers, it is worth their patience waiting to watch the feathered ones displaying their antics on the branches.

The old court is now a park reserve and finally enjoying the official protection it deserves. Once belonged to the British army officers who played tennis on the courts during the Minden years, it fell into disuse when the army vacated for USM to take over. When the Penang Bridge expressway needed to be built part of the land was excavated and that took away part of the tennis court that you can see today. However, whatever remained has become a 'relic' to remind us of the courts that was a favourite spot for early pioneering students to hangout... long before the strangler fig took roots. Hence it has inadvertently touched the hearts of many students of the seventies. 

Rusli Jamaluddin is currently a lecturer at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, USM.
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For many, rest equates to peace, calm and relaxation. All living things on this earth require some form of rest so that they do not get their circuits fried from being overworked. Here at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), rest for students generally relates to the mid-semester, inter-semester and inter-session breaks - something they hold precious and jealously defend if infringed upon.

For most USM researchers, breaks from teaching during the above-mentioned periods do not necessarily mean there are breaks from work. While it is true that there are no lectures during the break, there are certainly other things that need to be looked into - research-based activities, preparation for seminars and conferences and doing whatever is necessary to fulfil the University's KPIs, just to name a few.

Since the topic of rest is closely related to health, I decided to focus on health researchers based at USM's Health Campus in Kelantan for information regarding this issue.

A little background information is perhaps useful here. The Health Campus operates on a different academic calendar compared to the Main and Engineering campus.

For The Main and Engineering campus, each semester usually has two one-week breaks. Additionally, there are a four-week inter-semester break and a 10-week inter-session break per academic year.



The Health Campus community does get some opportunities to de-stress during family days

The Health Campus, in particular the Schools of Medical and Dental Sciences, operates on a phase basis: Phase One lasting one year and Phases Two and Three, two years each. Health Sciences operates on semester basis. Typically, students have about five or six break sessions spread throughout each phase, with each session lasting between one and two weeks. Inter-phase holidays vary from between three and 10 weeks.

According to Assoc Prof Dr Wan Aasim Wan Adnan of the School of Health Sciences, despite the fact that the Health Campus focuses on health-related issues and problems, he is unaware of any research efforts at USM which look into the effects of rest or relaxation on human life.

Wan Aasim, who specialises in anaesthetics, is also part of a research cluster that performs studies on behaviour and brain activity.

"Ironically, of all the Schools at the Health Campus, I feel that it is those stationed at the School of Medical Sciences who do not get enough rest," Wan Aasim tells *The Leader*.

"The reason is that academic staff have to juggle not only teaching and research, but also hospital service duty, which means they are on-call most of the time, even during the holiday period".

"I sympathise with these people because it seems that they really do not have a life outside the university," he explains.

He observes, however, that many Health Campus-based researchers are not from Kelantan and most take every opportunity to *balik kampung* (return to their hometown) when they can.

"Actually if one works at the Health Campus, one would most probably see familiar faces at the airport or bus station every Thursday after office hours waiting to board their transport back to their hometowns," he says.

Regarding weekends (where the two off-days are Friday and Saturday), Wan Aasim says they are guarded jealously by researchers as this is the time when almost everyone does the necessary and essential household chores.

During the end-of-phase breaks, it is close to impossible to schedule meetings.

"This is because usually no one is available. Everyone takes advantage of the longer break to relax and enjoy life outside the walls of the health campus," he says in jest.

Life at the Health Campus is, however, not stressful to all researchers. According to Wan Aasim, many lecturers and researchers do work from home as they find the environment at home a little more conducive than that at the office or laboratory.

There is even a golf club which is available to all Health Campus staff, in the effort to provide an avenue for stressed-out researchers to vent out their frustrations. "Perhaps it is time that we embark on an in-depth investigation on the effects of rest and relaxation on USM academic staff," he added. ■

A Rocking Night to Remember

Jenny Tan Suat Eam
B. Sc. '75

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

Popular American '70s band, the Eagles came blazing back after a 14-year absence in 1994 with the 'Hell Freezes Over' concert. British band, Take That, reunited last year, with its original lineup, for a new studio album and the Progress Live 2011 European concert tours. And now, Tabula Rasa will 'Come Together' for a very special performance this 24 September. Billed as the event of the year, the dinner concert at a local hotel will be headlined by USM's very own pioneer and longest running musical band, in conjunction with their fortieth anniversary, since its inception.

It is not a reunion concert per se as the group was never disbanded. Tabula Rasa has been a fixture at many alumni events, especially since 2005, including Balikpapanus and Sirih Pulang ke Gagang over the years.


Formed through the auspices of the Persatuan Seni Musika, which was the name of the music club at the time when USM was known as Universiti Pulau Pinang, the band adopted its name after being inspired during an anthropology lecture. Although Malay sounding, *tabula rasa* is actually a Latin phrase meaning 'clean slate', a state of which its band members found apt at that time. Playing in the band had provided the opportunity for members to express their talents through singing and playing musical instruments, weekend de-stress from academic pursuits and even playing in campus gigs at that time.



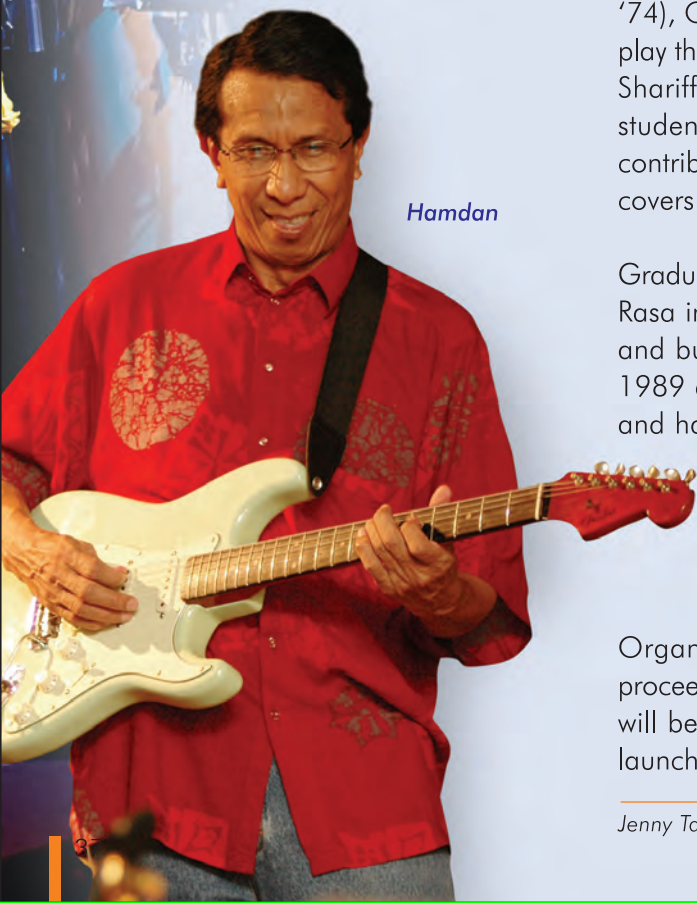
Omar

Headed by lead guitarist Hamdan Omar (B. Soc. Sc. '74), other early members include bass guitarist Md Isa Rastam, now Tan Sri (B. Soc. Sc. '74), Omar Haron (B. Soc. Sc. '74) and Ihsan Ibrahim (B. Sc. '79) who play the drums and rhythm guitar, respectively and Zainal Abidin Ahmad Shariff-ZABAS (B. Humanities '75) in lead vocals. There were other student members who joined in from time to time, doing their bit in contributing to the varied sounds of the band, which included Santana covers.

Graduation in 1974 and the pursuits of life after campus had put Tabula Rasa in hibernation as its members were busy establishing themselves and building families of their own. But yet, they kept in touch and in 1989 after the urging and support of fellow alumni, the band revived and had since played 'ad hoc' at some alumni gatherings. Additional members since include Jenny Tan (B. Sc. '75) on keyboard, Abdul Wahab Abdullah, Datuk (B. Soc. Sc. '76) on percussion, mandolin player Rais Abdul Majid (B. Soc. Sc. '74) and vocalist, Zulkifli Itam (B. Soc. Sc. '74).

Organised by Pejabat Pemaajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), proceeds from the 'Come Together' dinner concert tickets and donations will be channeled to the Alumni Foundation Fund, which will also be launched that evening. 

Jenny Tan Suat Eam can be contacted at suateam.jenny@gmail.com



Hamdan

A sundry shop is stocked with over-the-counter cough mixture to mahjong paper for flipcharts

Surviving the Break

Text and Photographs by
Yong Cheek Yoon

The area around Jalan Sungai Dua was a sleepy hollow with a two-lane road flanked by USM on one side and attap houses on the other. However, over the years, the USM community grew in population and inadvertently, a demand for various service industries had surged. This was the catalyst for food outlets, computer shops, stationery suppliers and a host of others to propagate in the area, as they are seen today.



The USM student community is indeed a boon for businesses but what happens when students go on long semester breaks? They would likely need less, if not any, of the services. That is according to how most people perceive the situation. Or is there something else that escapes our perception? To answer that question, *The Leader* went out to investigate what tide over these businesses during these dreary periods when the School corridors are deserted.

One of the businesses that we thought could be vulnerable is Duriemas Dynamic. It is one of the few art and graphic material suppliers in the area, albeit 'a little out of the way' since it is located a block away from USM's Sungai Dua gate.

Despite a significant student population, they cannot be depended largely for business survival



Sungai Dua shops are strategically located with businesses catering to the needs of students

"Although many students obtain specialised art materials from us, we cannot depend entirely on their business because we still have to survive during the long semester breaks," manager Khaw Chin Ting said.

He explained that, in fact, supplying art and graphic materials is not their main line of business.

"We also supply gifts, printing of posters, flyers, banners, streamers, magazines and brochures," Khaw said, adding that these services help to offset the leaner months as they are patronised by other businesses as well."

He pointed out that although the number of students plummets during semester breaks, the company continues to serve some offices and project groups in USM when they need to do some printing. Besides USM, the company has over the years built up its regular clientele from all over Pulau Pinang and as far as Perlis in the north.

The proprietor of Lai Photostat & Trading, who would only like to be known as Poh, pointed out that competition is very stiff with 15 shops of the same business operating within that row alone, where his shop is located.

"Certainly business drops during semester breaks and we have to cut costs during this period," he said.

Surviving the Break

When semesters are in session, the shop operates from 9 am for 12 hours. Otherwise, it will close two hours earlier to save on electricity, water and other overhead expenses, besides reducing the number of employees by half from about 10 persons.

Sally Cheah of Micro Ram Enterprise concur that there is a significant drop in the number of students coming to her shop during semester breaks. However, business from regular customers, some from USM itself, helped tide over these periods.

"We supply computers and peripherals to walk-in customers as well," she said, adding that she also looks forward to convocation time when the shop enjoys spillover business from visitors to USM.

She anticipates tougher times ahead with public universities changing their new term, beginning this year, from July to September.

"It is a two-month delay in starting the new term and some of the business operators in the area were taken aback when they learned about the change because their plans for the year has to be re-strategised," Cheah said.




Stationery shop, Miracle Stationery & Sport Centre, has built up a list of regular clients that it has been serving over the past 10 years.

Miracle owner, Tan Leong Leong, concurred with Cheah, saying that the delay in starting the new term would have an impact on businesses in the area.

"The late announcement of the new term is disappointing because I have completed my projection of this year's budget recently and now I have to rework my budget," Tan said.

He said that his business cannot depend solely on students even if their number is significant because he would still have to keep the shop open even when they go for vacation.

From a casual observation, it is possible to notice that businesses have changed in many of the shops over the years despite the challenges. Herbert Spencer applied 'survival of the fittest' in his economic theories and perhaps this is what is happening around USM. The businesses that we see are those that had managed to adapt, persevere and survive the process of 'natural selection' in this business environment. 



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

April 2011

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 **Niujie 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 Eastern Zhou Dynasty (c. 475-221BC) as a series of earthworks erected by individual kingdoms to protect themselves from other as well as from invasions from the north. The present-day remains of the wall are a 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. Dinner will be at a local restaurant during your visit the Burning Cream Centre. Dinner will be at a local restaurant during your visit the Burning Cream Centre.

D3 Beijing (B/L/D)

Morning tour begins with a visit to the **Summer Palace**, the largest and most beautiful of the imperial gardens in China. First built during the reign of Qianlong, a Qing Emperor, the Summer Palace was burned down in 1860 by the French and British army. The palace was later rebuilt by the Empress Dowager Cixi for her own pleasure. It became a favorite haunt of the last emperor, Puyi, who lived in the Forbidden City and had named it Yihé Yuan, which means "Garden of Harmonious Reunion". After escaping to the **Fresh Water Pearl Center** and after lunch, enjoy a free traditional Chinese performance. Afternoon tea and lunch are served in the **Madame Tussauds**.

Limited Seats left!

Next Attraction

6-13 Oct 2011

Jordan

Call 04-6534792 for further details



Photograph source: www.visitjordan.com

FOODIES PARADISE

Yusuf Suid
B. Comp. Sc. '06

Photographs by
Rusli Jamaluddin
Yusuf Suid
Yong Check Yoon

Artwork by Rusli Jamaluddin

Foodies' Paradise

In our quest to bring the readers of *The Leader* the best dishes that Penang can offer, *The Leader* team headed about 30 km south to the idyllic Pulau Aman in Seberang Perai Selatan in early January. To reach the 288-acre island, we had to board a motorised boat from the jetty at Batu Kawan and then spend 15 minutes on a rather relaxing boat ride as it took us across the placid sea. If, however, the prospect of taking a boat fills you with some amount of trepidation, fret not, for you can always take a ferry from the old jetty next to the popular seafood restaurant in Bukit Tambun.

To digress a little, only fresh seafood is served at the restaurants in Bukit Tambun. Therefore, it will come as no surprise that many Penangites have no qualms about travelling all the way from Pulau Pinang to the mainland for dinner at the seafood restaurants in Tambun.

The RM19 million jetty at Batu Kawan is part of the first phase of a Penang Development Corporation project. The second phase of this project will see the construction of a seafood centre, gallery and chalets.

The ferry from Pulau Aman starts at 8 am daily and subsequent trips are at noon, 3 pm and 6 pm. Ferry departure time from Batu Kawan on weekdays is at 10 am, followed by trips at three hourly intervals, with the last trip at 7 pm. On weekends and public holidays, the departure schedule depends on full boat capacity. A two-way fare is RM 6 for adults and RM 4 for children.

From left : The 'Floating Restaurant' where the **mee udang** is sold ; **sukun** (bottom right) is made into fritters and chips



Those who have been to Pulau Aman before would most likely remember the *mee udang* (prawn noodles) sold at the restaurant on the dilapidated jetty. The *Restoran Terapung* (Floating Restaurant) has since moved to the new jetty located about 150 metres away.

Regulars to the island are also likely to notice changes in the price of the *mee udang*, from RM 5 per plate to RM 6. The number of prawns in each serving has also dropped from five to three. The change, however, is negligible, considering the fact that the prawns are fresh and are also larger in size by comparison.

Pulau Aman currently has about 200 inhabitants. The island has two restaurants (including *Restoran Terapung*) and numerous chalets. Villagers harvest *buah sukun* (breadfruit) found in the kampung close to the jetty and turn them into *kerepek sukun* (breadfruit chips) as part of their cottage industry.

Although the trip we took to the island was a short one, we certainly savoured our time there with great relish. If you are thinking of a short break, Pulau Aman is definitely the place to go, far, far away from the maddening crowd. **L**

The Batu Kawan jetty as seen from Pulau Aman



Building a Humaniversity

"It is important that humanitarian values flourish once again in the universities as they represent the basis for the holistic growth of an organisation and a nation," USM Vice-Chancellor Prof. Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak told a packed Dewan Budaya.

He added during his Annual Address on 5 January that it is important to focus on bringing back these values because the true concept of a university emphasises human education and humanity.

"Today, higher education has become an industry and many universities and colleges are competing to offer courses that are profitable. Courses that touch on humanitarian aspects such as philosophy and literature are no longer offered," he said in a media conference after presenting the Vice-Chancellor's Message titled *Insaniversiti: Menginsan Universiti* (*Humaniversity: Humanising the University*) after the event.





Dewan Budaya is packed with guests, USM staff and students listening to Dzul's Annual Address

Dzul went on to say that as a centre of knowledge, a university ought to focus on its role of adding value to itself, that is, to develop a holistic form of education.

"If a person has been educated in one area of specialisation only, without the inclusion of humanitarian values, he will not be a complete person and ultimately this will jeopardise the country's development," he explained.

He added that an incomplete education may lead to widespread social problems such as corruption, bribery and crime.

Commenting on USM's role and its efforts towards humanising the university, he stressed "For a long time now, we have carried out various activities of a similar nature, but under the APEX agenda, a specific framework has been drawn up to ensure that this aspect is included in the university's development." He said that one of the measures taken was to help the marginalised, including the less fortunate and the physically disabled to live a normal life.

"For example, we have set up a school in Merbok, Kedah to help people who are less fortunate to obtain a better education.

"This effort has paid off as we can see that so far, more than 50 students from this school have succeeded in pursuing their education at tertiary level," he said. Dzul also said that USM has to focus on this in order to uphold the name of the university. In this way it can have a significant impact and play the role of what a university truly ought to be.

Meanwhile, at the same event, the Malaysian Youth Council and the Penang Society Development Association made a special contribution of a wheelchair and a laptop to USM student, Kumanan Kandasamy.

Kumanan, a second-year Social Science student was selected to receive aid because of his difficult circumstances, including that of caring for his old and physically disabled parents.

The laptop he received is equipped with special software for the visually impaired.



Kumanan (left) accompanying his mother to receive a wheelchair

Reproduced with minor editing of Humaniversity: Instilling Humanitarian Values in University from USM news archive (<http://www.usm.my/index.php/en/about-usm/news-archive/66-news-highlight/7521-insaniversiti-makmurkan-nilai-kemanusiaan-dalam-universiti.html>)

A Visit to Sarawak

Representatives from Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA) met with USM alumni in Kuching, on 23 December 2010. The visit was to strengthen ties with the Sarawak Chapter.



Webb's Khutbah

Suhaib Webb (born William Webb), a former successful hip-hop DJ turned activist and Islamic speaker, became the first non-USMite foreigner to deliver a *khutbah* (sermon) in Masjid Al-Malik Khalid USM on 14 January. The one time Imam of an Oklahoma City *masjid* (mosque) in USA, who is a *hafiz* (Qur'an memorizer) in multiple recitation styles, impressed the congregation with his message of brotherhood delivered in eloquent English spiced with fluent Qura'nic and Arabic references.

Brainstorming The Leader

The Leader editorial board attended a workshop on 17 December 2010 at a hotel in Pulau Pinang to review various policies of the magazine. Other issues such as future circulation and quality improvement were also discussed.



Bullseye

Seventy athletes from the state of Pulau Pinang participated in the USM Invitational Archery Tournament from 28–30 December 2010. Yushaizam Yahaya captained the varsity team.

After 38 Years

About 20 pioneers, mostly from the School of Social Sciences (class of '73), gathered at one of the hotels in Kuala Lumpur on 15 January, from noon till 4 pm, to catch up with what has been happening in their lives over the past years.



The Making of a Champion

Syed Kamil Nafis Syed Yusuf, a first-year student at the School of Housing, Building and Planning, won the prestigious J.A. Rodgers Cup at the Penang Horse Show organised by the Penang Turf Club recently. With this win, Syed Kamil, who rode LTM Star Sasa, became the first Penangite to win the cup.

An Expert Recognised

Prof Dato' Paduka Dr Wan Mohamad Wan Bebakar, Senior Consultant Endocrinologist, Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia received the International Clinical Award 2010, conferred by the American College of Endocrinology (ACE) in Kuala Lumpur on 2 December 2010. He is the sole endocrinologist from Asia to receive this award for improving the quality of service in the treatment for endocrine patients in this country and the Asean region.



Simply the Best

Four USM PhD students received the Vice-Chancellor Award 2011 during the *Malam Persada Kencana* in recognition of their academic achievements and the potential of their research. Lim Way Foong and Quah Hock Jin from the School of Materials and Mineral Resources Engineering, Chang Kah Haw from the School of Health Sciences and Lam Man Kee from the School of Chemical Engineering. They received the award from the Vice-Chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dzulkifli Abdul Razak on 10 December which carries a monthly allowance of RM3,000 for a maximum of three years with tuition and examination fees covered.





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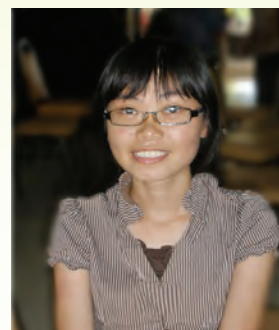
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Malaysia's longest
surviving varsity band



Tabula Rasa

is **40** years old

24 September 2011

rtwork by Mohamed Talhah Idrus

COME TOGETHER

at **Hotel Equatorial** Pulau Pinang