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Guest Contributors

 **Eve Teh Pei Ing** is a Japanese Research Analyst, Thomas Reuters, Penang.

 **Marziana Mohamed Alias** is a Publication Officer, Public Relations Office, USM.

 **Dr Lee Yu Chuang** is a paediatrician at Loh Guan Lye Hospital, Penang.

For those who are interested to contribute articles to The Leader, please refer to <http://alo.usm.my/> for a writer's guidelines. Cover artwork by Alec Chin. USM has always been a melting pot of cultures.

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Editorial

In this issue of *The Leader* we celebrate unity in diversity as reflected in Penang, generally, and USM, particularly. Both thrive in a vibrant cosmopolitan environment. Penang, being a port serves as a unique melting pot of cultures where the communities are able to relish the best of everything. The same goes for USM. The differences do not deter the various communities to live together amicably, exchanging practices, sharing various aspects of their cultures.

As attested to in past articles of *The Leader* USM stood to benefit from expatriate lecturers from various parts of the world, such as Anthony R. Walker, David S. Gibbons and John Lent. When they left USM and Penang, they took with them fond memories, maintaining contacts with some of their students and colleagues. What Prof Diane Stone from Australia felt when she found cooked chicken feet in her porridge was one of those initial culture shocks which eventually one got used to. Additionally, one's ears will be attuned to the uniqueness of *Manglish* (Malaysian English) which incorporates local dialects, generously peppered with 'lor' (from Chinese) and 'la' (from Malay).

Another similarity between Penang and the University is the occurrence of inter-ethnic marriages. Despite the common belief that such marriages are doomed to fail because of the cultural differences, the naysayers were proven wrong in a number of cases. We have one story to illustrate the point.

Living in a multicultural society is like relishing a plate of *mee goreng* (fried yellow noodles). One does not bother to ask why the delectable dish has Chinese yellow noodles cooked with fried bean curd and prawn fritters, ingredients used in *pasembur* (a Malaysian Indian salad). Incredible as it may seem, you would never be able to find this dish in India!

A lesson in harmonious coexistence can never be complete without the mention of the kilometre-long Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling where one can locate the houses of worship belonging to the various ethnic groups in Penang, such as the St George's Church, Guan Imm Temple, Sri Maha Mariamman Temple, and Masjid Kapitan Keling. Each of the different communities live juxtaposed to one another since the 18th century, accepting each other's differences and embracing the similarities *sans* slogans.

The Editorial Committee



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THE SUMMIT

AMBASSADORS SUMMIT | BRIDGING GLOBAL COLLABORATORS

Yong Check Yoon Photographs by Mohd Fairus Md Isa

On 14 September 2012, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) hosted the inaugural Ambassadors Summit with the theme *Bridging Global Collaborators* at Dewan Budaya. Twelve diplomats representing Palestine, Argentina, Pakistan, Libya, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Cuba, Japan, Thailand, Indonesia and France attended a full-day meeting which included presentations by USM representatives and the diplomats, ending with a question and answer session.



The inaugural Ambassadors Summit in session

The event started with Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Vice-Chancellor, Prof Dato' Omar Osman presenting his Welcoming Remarks where he pointed out that among the countries that have the most number of postgraduate student enrolment in USM, Iran led with 472 students then followed by Indonesia (355) and Iraq (231).

USM's multi-national community has grown over the years just as its network of collaborations from the Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) and the Memorandums of Agreement (MoA). It has to date inked 338 MoU and 201 MoA with various countries of which Indonesia, Japan and Thailand were three countries to top the list with the number of MoU and MoA signed.

Omar also briefed the envoys on USM's developments pertaining to higher education, research collaboration and other relevant issues. He also suggested that the Ambassadors Summit can be held on a rotational basis.

The Summit

Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) Prof Asma Ismail touched on how USM broke the norms in terms of research to focus on outcomes and technology development that will reduce inequity and enhance sustainability.

"The objective of which to make these developments available, affordable and accessible to those who need them through community engagement," she said.

On citations, she said that basing on per citation per paper per field, USM's engineering is the best, capturing the top one percent of the papers of the world, then followed by chemistry which leads among the research universities.



Asma

Ahmad Shukri

"We need to work with the best in a particular field and that is why we want to work with France to improve on the study of material science," Asma added.

In her presentation, she also pointed out that the number of active patents granted to USM rose to 23 in the country and 19 internationally since the inception of being granted the Research University status in 2007. Currently USM has a total of 248 patents filed and pending within the same period.

In the presentation by Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International Affairs) Prof Ahmad Shukri Mustapa Kamal, he said that USM is one of the five Research Intensive Universities in Malaysia, fully funded by the Federal Government.

He then highlighted that USM collaborated with Universite Henri Poincare (UHP) of France since 1999. In this research collaboration, postgraduate students from both universities took part in various research activities, workshops and student attachments.

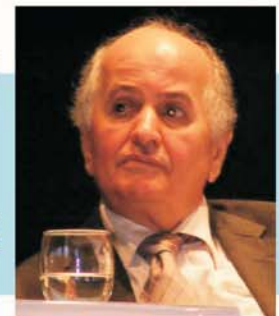
One of the significant outcomes of this collaboration was the *co-tutelle* programme which is essentially a double PhD, one from France and another from USM. It first started off with research then to joint PhDs. USM is currently in talks with universities from other countries, such as Japan, for variations of joint PhDs but likely to begin with research.

There are not many countries offering *co-tutelle* programme, he said, but Australia is one of them and USM has conducted some discussions, identifying University of Sydney and Macquarie University as examples.

"USM has 241 student exchange partners in 28 countries including those within The Association of Commonwealth Universities, the International Association of Universities, and University Mobility in Asia and the Pacific (UMAP)," Shukri said.



Masood



Abdelaziz

Most of the ambassadors or representatives outlined the education system of their respective countries, their countries educational link with Malaysia and how such bilateral ties can be improved in the future.

In his presentation, His Excellency (H.E.) Abdelaziz A. A. Abuqutaish of the Embassy of the State of Palestine said that there were 61 postgraduate students in USM. He said that Palestinian graduates from USM are able to return to help the universities in the Occupied Territories. Abdelaziz then appealed to the international Muslim community to help the universities in Palestine.

"Pakistan," H.E. Masood Khalid of the Pakistan Embassy in Malaysia said, "has to date signed a total of 11 MoU with various Malaysian universities including one between USM and Punjab."

The Summit

He said that such cooperation in education has been improving over the years as currently there are some 3,400 students with 2,000 of them pursuing tertiary education with Malaysian scholarships.

The situation is somewhat different in Japan as Mdm Hiroko Taniguchi of the Consulate-General of Japan in Penang pointed out.



Stephanie



Hiroko

"There are about 1,500 Malaysians under the Japanese Government Scholarships while approximately 6,200 are the Look East Policy students," she said. "This year (2012) is the thirtieth anniversary of the Look East Policy initiated by the then Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad."

In fact, Malaysians who graduated from Japan have formed two alumni groups: the Japan Graduates' Association in Malaysia (JAGAM) and the Alumni Look East Policy Society (ALEPS).

Hiroko also highlighted that the top three countries that Japanese students who are studying abroad went to as in October 2010 were the USA (41 percent), People's Republic of China (26 percent) and the United Kingdom (6 percent).

On strategic partnerships with Malaysian universities, she said that Prof Ryoji Noyori, a 2001 Nobel Prize winner in Chemistry, heading the RIKEN Institute, signed a MoU with USM in April 2012. He was awarded an honorary degree by USM.


Dr Stephanie Doverts, head of the Cultural, Scientific and Co-operation Department of the French Embassy in Kuala Lumpur, remarked in his speech that France firmly believes in higher learning, and R&D Development. As such, the country spends $\text{€}42$ billion per year on R&D which is equivalent to 2.1 percent of the country's Gross Domestic Product and that is above the average spent in the European Union.

"France emphasises on a strong university system as such, public universities are founded by the national government that regulates the degrees granted by these 83 public universities," he said.

Stephanie then added that public universities provide training in all disciplines and that "the tuition fees for Bachelor or Masters degrees do not exceed $\text{€}300$ or RM1000 per year". In 2011, France accommodated more than 2.4 million students, of which 300,000 were foreign students.

"France believes that everyone is entitled to knowledge and that is why France is spending over $\text{€}3$ billion per year on the education of French students," he said.

He then added that as Asma and Shukri had earlier said in their presentations, French and Malaysian universities, including USM, cooperated on various programmes. However, he said that France is looking beyond MoU, towards the content, outputs and the sustainability of a programme.

The Summit ended with a dialogue session where questions were fielded by participants attending the meeting. Participants will then be looking forward to the Muslim Vice-Chancellors Conference in early December and there will be opportunity for those Vice-Chancellors who missed the Summit to attend. 

"Heartiest congratulations for a very well-organised and successful event. It was also very informative and had provided helpful information for those who attended. I wish that this would be a part of USM's annual programme. Kudos!"

- Zubaidah Amir
Participant

what say we...

Teruskan usaha murni anda. Syabas!

Jerome Lim
B. A. (Edu) '95

Teruskan jadi penghubung kami dengan USM.
Kempen maksima untuk soft-copy.

Rozita Ahmad
B. Sc. (Edu) '06

Thank you for sending the latest issue of the *The Leader* to me. I have been receiving the magazine since May 2011 issue. Since I am a graduate in USM almost three decades ago, in year 1983 (HBP), I am sorry to inform you that the magazine and information failed to incite my interest and to spur me to share my life with the rest of the alumnus/alumna. Lastly, I wish *The Leader* every success in all future publications. Thank you.

Tam Hee
B. Sc. (HBP) '83

I love reading *The Leader* because it keeps me updated on my beloved alma mater. Buying it is my way of helping to contribute to the university. Thank you to all of the writers and contributors. USM is always close to my heart.

Kathleen Mujan Nandong
B. Sc. (HBP) '07

Good! Especially 'Keeping Track'. This is a very useful section to find our friends and keep us connected.

Assoc Prof Ahmad Badri Ismail
B. Eng. '90

Thank you for making an effort to connect USM alumni. A soft copy will do for me and you can stop sending me the hard copy immediately until the soft copy is ready. I feel the pain of throwing away papers/books and magazines after reading it for 30 minutes. A real waste of resources from the trees to managing the recycling stuff. This is more environmentally friendly and has cost savings for the publisher. I suggest that you just announce that you will go 100% soft copy and that is it. If 30% opt for hard copy, the cost will still be high. What will be useful for us readers are: 1. Access to database (Name, email, profession, year graduate) of USM alumni so that we create a powerful network of contacts to support each other. 2. Organise the database by year and faculty. Thank you.

Leong Wai Kheong
B. Sc. (Edu) '83

Editor replies: Wai Kheong, thank you for your comments and recommendations. We will be drastically cutting down the number of printed copies as from this issue. Pertaining to the USM alumni database access, we are, unfortunately, unable to release them because many of the alumni prefer their personal information to remain confidential. We have to respect that although you are also correct in pointing out that database access would enable us to find long lost friends.

When Dealing with Crime Does Pay



Sundramoorthy and a confiscated cache of imitation guns



At a seminar with top officers from the police force

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

Yong Check Yoon

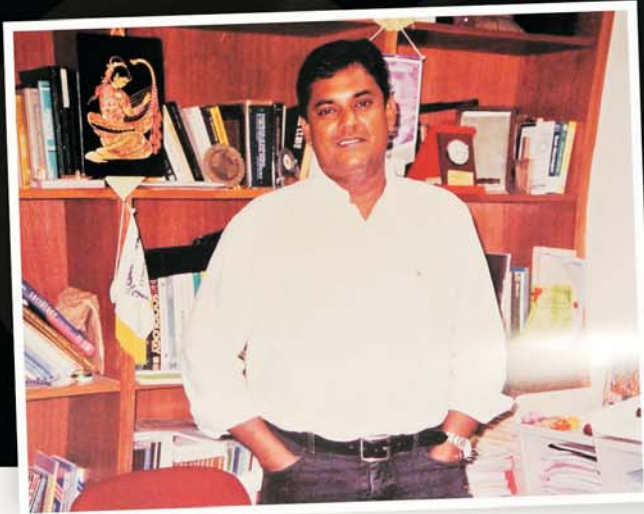
Photographs courtesy of P. Sundramoorthy

Twice P. Sundramoorthy was unsuccessful to realise his ambition inspired by his late father, Assistant Superintendent, M. Pathmanathan.

The first time he was called up for an interview to join the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) in 1978 he could not attend as he was then in Singapore studying for his A-Levels at a private high school, upon completion of the Malaysian Certificate of Education.

The second time was in 1981, after graduating with a Bachelor's degree from St Clouds State University (SCSU), Minnesota, United States of America (USA), majoring in Criminal Justice.

He had applied to be a cadet assistant police superintendent during the economic doldrums of 1985/86. Out of the thousands of applications for the 33 jobs available he was one of those invited for an interview. He attended the session, enthusiastically relating his undergraduate experiences as an intern doing police work, which later progressed to executing undercover jobs for the vice and narcotics unit in USA. He did not get the job.

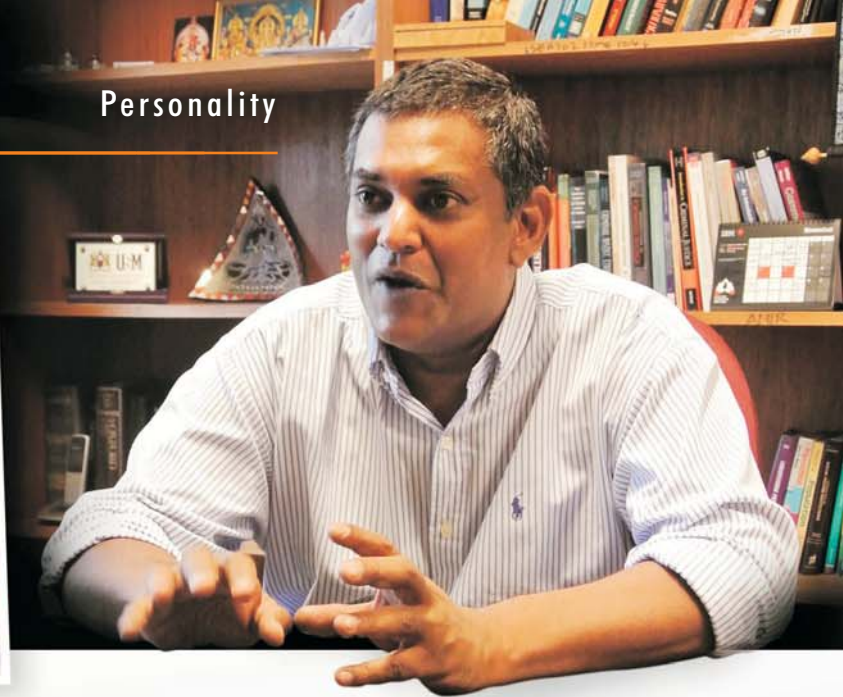


With his collection of books and antiques

"It was disheartening. I was emotionally devastated as I had all this while wanted to join the police force."

Almost immediately, shaking off that feeling of dejection, Sundramoorthy wrote a letter to his professor-cum-mentor, Prof Robert Prout, and soon received a response. A Masters programme in Criminal Justice has just been established and Sundramoorthy was offered a scholarship to continue his studies.

Sundramoorthy returned to USA at a time when his friends and relatives thought it peculiar for him to study criminology, a course unheard of, whereas others were pursuing business administration, computer science or finance.



Speaking highly of Prof Prout and another mentor, Prof Barry Schreiber, he said, "They instilled confidence in me and motivated me to push myself further than what I thought I was capable of."

He continued, "I chose the mixed-mode programme instead of doing 100 per cent coursework."

Initially, Sundramoorthy helped out his professors as a teaching assistant. Eventually, however, he was given his own class to teach. Just as he was finishing his programme, SCSU has an opening for the post of acting director of security. He was offered the job for three months which he thought would be great as he would be able to continue with his PhD upon completing the task. Little did he anticipate that he would be holding the post for the next two years and three months.

"It was very odd for a non-US citizen to hold that post but I was provided a work permit," he mused. "While I was the acting director of security, I was also teaching a class every semester as an adjunct lecturer for the Criminal Justice Department."



Playing host with police top brass

When Dealing with Crime Does Pay


His experiences grew significantly in this a very specialised field. He came to realise that there is a need to understand social human behaviour as it is often related to problems of criminality. Criminal Justice or Criminology is a subfield of the larger discipline of human behaviour or sociology.

"For that reason, I decided to do my PhD in Sociology," Sundramoorthy explained. "Subsequently I received a fellowship at the South Dakota University in 1989 where I was given a course to teach in the Sociology Department based on my experiences."

Completing his doctoral programme in three years and three months Sundramoorthy was hired by the University as a full-time faculty member.

During a holiday in Malaysia, a family friend brought to his attention the possibility of returning to work in the country, at the School of Social Sciences, Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), in Sociology Division. Sundramoorthy submitted his curriculum vitae. In 1994 he joined USM. Over the years, the now-associate professor has supervised several Masters and PhD candidates in criminology, some of whom are police officers and academicians from other universities. Besides a group of new graduates Sundramoorthy's students include a lawyer and a judge who is doing a Masters on a part-time basis by research mode.

"Currently I have a doctoral candidate who is the director of security for a multinational corporation in Malaysia," he said. "Private security," he pointed out, comes under the discipline of criminology.

His stubborn determination paid off. Now-associate professor Sundramoorthy would have made his parents proud. Armed with vast first hand experiences throughout his academic endeavour he is often sought out by the media as an authority to discuss and analyse issues relating to criminology in the country. 

Sharifah Darweena Syed Ahmad Amir Feisal is currently an Assistant Registrar at the Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), USM. She can be contacted at darr_wynn@yahoo.com. Yong Cheek Yoon is currently an editor in Pejabat Pemajuan dan Perhubungan Alumni (PPPA), USM. He can be reached at check_yoon@yahoo.com.



What it takes to be a criminologist

"Criminologists earning a degree in Criminal Justice need to have at least a postgraduate degree in a related field such as mathematics, chemistry, economics, social sciences (general), sociology, or psychology, to call themselves 'criminologists'. They also have to be actively involved in research, provide consultation, teach and supervise postgraduate students in the field of study," said Sundramoorthy.

"Many eminent sociologists do not have a bachelor's degree in sociology but perhaps have a PhD in the social sciences. Citing an example, he said that some people may have a degree in communication but discover that they are keen in media culture and how it is associated with criminality. Hence they can be researchers or academicians in that area of discipline."

The degree awarded upon graduation is Social Sciences (Criminology) and opportunities for this discipline are growing. Since the last general election in 2008, crime has been identified as the second most important social issue to be taken up in the government's transformation programme National Key Result Areas (NKRA).



AHMAD DZULFIKAR
SAMSUDIN



AHMAD FAHMI
MOHAMAD
BUSTAMAN



AHMED FAISAL
ARIFF



CH'NG LAY LING



CHRISTINA JOYCE
NASIMUTHU



FIZATUL FIDA
MOHD NOOR



GOPAL NAIR
RAMAN NAIR



HASZELINI HASSAN



HWONG
YIU DWEN



IZANA ISHAK



KARIMAH WAHIDA
ZULKIFLI



LOH YIH SHYANG



LOOI KOK WENG



MARINA MUBIN



MASYITAH
AKBAR ALI



MUNIRAH YAACOB



NIK NORASIKIM
RAMLI



NOR AIDANIZA
ABDUL MUTTLIB



NOR WATI @ NUR
ATIKAH MUSTAFA



NURHAYU
AB RAHMAN



NURIAH
MOHAMMED



NURUL AIDA
NGAH



ONG SIANG CHING



ROSMARIA
DERAMAN



ROSNALIZA
KAMARUDDIN



SITI FATIMAH
SUAHID



WAN NOREZRINY
WAN AB KADIR



WILLIAM YEN
WAI LEONG



YUSMARIA
MOHD YUSOFF



The Golden Touch

Tan Ewe Hoe
B. Sc. '93

Yong Check Yoon

Photographs by
Mohd Fairus Md Isa

Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) clinched 10 gold medals and four special awards for four inventions that it showcased at the recent British Invention Show 2012 (BIS 2012). Obviously it was not an easy quest as BIS 2012 attracted the participation of about 20 countries and featured 300 products during the four-day event beginning October 24. From Malaysia alone, there were 52 entries submitted by nine organisations.



Higher Education Minister Dato' Seri Mohamed Khaled Nordin (fifth from right) chatting with the winners

Submissions came under the scrutiny of a panel of 25 expert judges who, on behalf of the British Inventor's Society, evaluated the inventions basing on "their social and ecological benefits to mankind, originality, ingenuity as well as design to the test". Participants looked forward to the announcement of the winners of the coveted prizes on 26 October. It was obvious that the competition was very tough because BIS drew in participants showcasing their best inventions.

For USM, the Smart Cervix Kit, an automated and user friendly device that is able to detect pre-cancerous cell accurately in less than a minute, won three gold medals and two special awards, a Platinum Award and a Special Award from Russia. The inventors are Yong Bang Ming, Teng Yuan Jun, and Qiao Ho Yee from the School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering.

"This project focuses on early prevention of cervical cancer without the need for any laboratory tests," Yong said.

Azrina Mohamed Isa, Hoo Peng Yong and Muhammad Yusri Hadi Muhammad Azli took home three gold medals and the Double Gold and Platinum Awards with their Crustagant, a biodegradable and natural flocculant obtained from biomass waste. Crustagant is used as a cost effective means to treat oily wastewater by means of flocculation (meaning 'to form lumps or masses') when the oil is adsorbed by the Crustagant which can then be separated easily.

Easy Go and SmartCoat won a gold medal each. Designed by Izziza Wan Ibrahim, Easy Go was designed to help disabled people without legs below the knee to move about. SmartCoat, however, is a nanoparticle solution by Lee Chee Yang to effectively eliminate bacteria, absorb unpleasant odours, prevent fungus and detoxify volatile organic compounds under visible light.

School of Chemical Engineering Prof Abdul Latif Ahmad, who headed the delegation, said this that USM performed its best in BIS 2012 as compared to those of the four previous occasions that it had participated.

"This year USM was able to put on its best performance to bring home 10 gold medals," he said, brimming with satisfaction. "USM won only seven gold medals in the previous BIS."

The culmination of BIS 2012 was another milestone for the British Inventors Society which first hosted the event in 2001. The society and the shows that it organized served as a common platform for "leading inventors and innovators, academics and entrepreneurs" to sow the seeds of innovation that "drives the world's technology and new orders of wealth creation." However, USM wished that its inventions will eventually reach out to the bottom billion to narrow the disparity between the rich and the poor in terms of access to technology, not just "new orders of wealth creation". 

Experiencing JAPAN

Sakura season in Kyoto

Eve Teh Pei I'ng
B. A. '12

Photographs courtesy of
Eve Teh Pei I'ng



Spring at Bapakukouen

Japan - The Land of the Rising Sun - is an amazing country that has much to offer to anyone who yearns for a taste of its unique culture. Thanks to the inter-university exchange programme offered by Universiti Sains Malaysia, my dream of studying abroad at minimum cost was finally realised.

I participated in an exchange programme at Kansai Gaidai, a private university located in the suburb of Osaka in Hirakata City. 'Kansai' refers to the south-central region of Japan while 'Gaidai' is an abbreviation for *Gaikokugo Daigaku*, which means 'foreign language university'. The university is one of Japan's most favourable foreign language institutions, hosting more than 400 foreign exchange students yearly.



Kansai Gaidai

Campus Life

Experiencing Japan

During my exchange term, I faced many obstacles and challenges but there were pleasant and memorable times as well. Culture shock was inevitable but thanks to the support I received from friends, everything went well. Some aspects of Japan's unique culture were much easier to accept and adhere to. There were, however, certain social norms that required some time to get used to, for example, gender inequality, which still dominates most of Japan. Coming from Malaysia where men and women are treated as equals, gender inequality, which implies male superiority, was not something that I was ready to embrace wholeheartedly. It was really difficult for me to even begin to understand why such practice still persists in modern Japan.

The social norms in Japan also dictate that walking while chewing on snacks was unacceptable. Even drinking from a can of soda while walking was deemed socially inappropriate. Even though these behaviors are quite normal in Malaysia, I do understand that people in Japan look down on such behavior so as to reduce the incidence of littering. I must say that having an Asian background certainly helped me to some extent in identifying and understanding certain social norms in Japan.



Enjoying the cherry blossom season



Winter at Fukuoka



Celebrating new year by learning how to make Mochi (rice cake)



Outing with friends at Tenmabashi

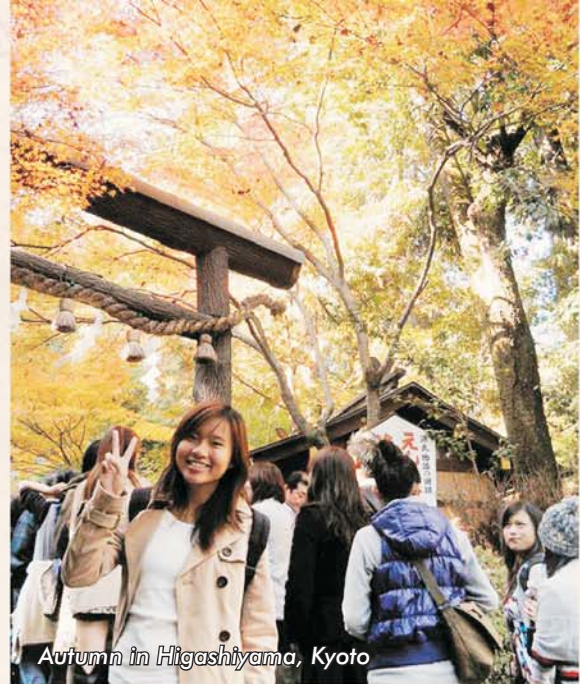
The most challenging part of the exchange programme was overcoming the language barrier. Initially, my assumption was that Japan, being a monolingual country, would use only one standard language. However, that fact proved to be wrong. The Japanese language, like many other languages around the world, has its own variations. I had to learn Osaka-ben and Kyoto-ben ('ben' refers to dialect or accent), variations of standard Japanese which are widely spoken in the Kansai region. The prior understanding I had of basic Japanese grammar certainly helped speed up the learning process though. I was intrigued at how Kansai-ben was able to add more 'flavour' to the spoken language, thus making it much more interesting.

Coming from a tropical country, I looked forward to experiencing the changing of the seasons. That, to me, was the most anticipated adventure and I was certainly not disappointed - my first winter, spring, summer and autumn were all utterly magical. Kyoto in particular was exceptionally beautiful and was magically transformed with each changing season.

Campus Life

Experiencing Japan

Kyoto City, situated 45 minutes by train from Hirakata City, is the formal capital of Japan during the Edo period. Despite being a metropolis, Kyoto has been able to preserve most of its natural heritage and traditions. Located in a valley surrounded by three huge mountains namely Higashiyama, Kitayama and Nishiyama, it is a must-visit destination for every tourist. No word can describe the striking beauty of the lilies and tulips as well as the cherry blossoms in spring, the vibrant maple leaves in autumn and the white carpet of snow in winter. The views of each season were so surreal. The excitement of welcoming of each season was heightened by the various events held, such as barbeque outings, drinking parties and cosplay, during which people dress up and pretend to be fictional characters. Even cute puppies would be dressed up in samurai outfits for the event.



Autumn in Higashiyama, Kyoto

Where classes in Gaidai are concerned, they are conducted in an entirely different manner from that of local institutions in Malaysia. Kansai Gaidai focuses more on the practical part of learning, that is, to acquire understanding through hands-on experience. One of the elective classes I took was about the history of Japan and how changes came about because of the war. A field trip to Hiroshima was organised by the professor in charge and it was during this time that I had the opportunity to meet one of the last few survivors of the Hiroshima-Nagasaki nuclear bombing incident which took place during World War Two.

The lady I met has had close encounters with death, lived through tragic incidents and even suffered chronic illness due to the side effects of radiation which required the removal of a huge portion of her intestine. That weekend tour to Hiroshima made me realise the catastrophe that comes with war and also how lucky I am to be living in relative peace in Malaysia, free from life-threatening conflicts.

The completion of the one year exchange programme was marked by a glorious graduation ceremony along with a grand sushi feast. My journey at Kansai Gaidai came to an end that day but I will forever cherish the ties of friendship created and the memories made with friends from all over the world. Saying goodbye was hard but I look forward to the day when we will meet again. 🇯🇵



Met a WW2 survivor at Hiroshima



With other students after the graduation ceremony

Congratulations



Past and present Presidents of IAU: (left to right) Goolam Mohammedbhai (President, 2004-2008), Juan Ramon de la Fuente (2009-2012); Dzulkipli Abdul Razak (2013-2016)

Universiti Sains Malaysia
congratulates

Prof Tan Sri Dzulkipli Abdul Razak (B. Pharm '76)

on his being elected president of the

International Association of Universities (IAU)

for the Administrative Board of 2013 to 2016.

He is the first Malaysian to hold the prestigious
position in the Paris-based association's

60-year history. Dzulkipli was also the first

Vice-President from 2009 to 2012.

You make USM alumni proud of your fine achievements.



Astroturf Terbit Bibit Cinta Pada Kampus!

Marziana Mohamed Alias
B. Comm. '05

Photographs courtesy of
Marziana Mohamed Alias

Tawaran untuk melanjutkan pengajian ke Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) pada mulanya saya sambut dengan sedikit rasa kecewa. Bukan kerana menyangka menara gading ini tidak hebat atau tidak menyeronokkan, namun hajat untuk beralih angin melanjutkan pengajian ke Lembah Klang tidak kesampaian. Lahir di negeri Perak dan meneruskan pengajian sehingga ke peringkat Matrikulasi di sekitar wilayah utara membuatkan pilihan untuk ke universiti lebih menumpu kepada universiti di Selatan tanahair.

Pun begitu, tawaran ke USM tetap diterima, mengenangkan masih bernasib baik kerana mendapat kursus yang dipohon iaitu Ijazah Sarjana Muda Komunikasi. Rakan-rakan seangkatan ada yang dihantar sehingga ke Sabah dan Sarawak, tanpa kerelaan dan dengan tawaran kursus yang tidak dipohon, malangnya nasib mereka!

Langkah pertama ke manara ilmu ini menjadikan hati seakan mahu menangis semahu-mahunya. Manakan tidak, diriku yang agak 'berani' ditempatkan di Desasiswa Cahaya Permai, Blok H 24 (ketika ini telah menjadi kompleks pentadbiran dan pejabat Hal Ehwal Pelajar). Sudahlah kediamannya agak menggerunkan, ditambah pula dengan perabot lama usang yang seakan menjadikan aku teras mahu ikut pulang bersama keluarga.

"Ini semua cabaran menuntut ilmu. Jangan mengalah, jangan tinggal solat lima waktu dan banyak-banyakkanlah mengaji al-Quran," lembut suara Ibu membisikkan nasihat ke telinga. Nasihat itu sehingga

kini, setelah saya juga dikurniakan seorang cahaya mata, tidak pernah lekang dari bibir seorang ibu. Alhamdulillah Ibu, pesanmu tidak pernah ku lupa walau di mana jua berada.

Hari-hari seterusnya menjadikan keadaan semakin baik. Rakan-rakan, kuliah, tutorial, aktiviti riadah, menjadikan kehidupan kampus semakin terisi. Ketakutan bukan lagi menjadi satu kekangan. Saya kini semakin berani dan sudah boleh ke bilik air pada jam 2.45 pagi. Satu pembaharuan! Institusi keilmuan ini mengubah cara hidup saya ke arah yang lebih baik, baik dari segi pergaulan, cara hidup, disiplin diri mahupun cara berkomunikasi.

Menjadikan dunia kampus lebih menyerikan, saya terbaca iklan untuk pemilihan pemain hoki bagi mengisi kekosongan pasukan varsiti dalam sukan hoki. Tidak banyak bertanya, saya terus menelefon ayah untuk memberitahunya seupaya membawa bersama kayu hoki yang tersimpan di rumah kerana mereka (ibu bapa) berhajat ke Pulau Pinang untuk melawat anak kedua mereka ini pada hujung minggu tersebut.

Astroturf Terbit Bibit Cinta Pada Kampus!

Kegusaran mula timbul apabila mengenangkan sebelum ini hanya bermain untuk sekolah. Itu pun Cuma di peringkat daerah. Paling tinggi pun, menyertai Kejohanan Hoki Piala Milo, peringkat negeri tetapi bukan mewakili negeri. Mampukah aku? Mesti ramai yang *terror!* Takutlah pulak! Boleh ke ni? Semua persolan tersebut mula timbul. Namun atas minat yang begitu mendalam dalam sukan ini, saya menggagahkan diri untuk menyertai sesi pemilihan tersebut.



Pasukan mendapat tempat ketiga pada Pesta Hoki Antarabangsa USM Pulau Pinang 2004

Alhamdulillah, ketika senarai nama dikeluarkan saya terpilih. Wah, ini sudah bagus. Ketika itulah saat-saat saya di menara gading mendatangkan 1001 keseronokan. Ibarat seperti uda bertemu dara, penulis juga merasakan pemilihan ke kampus ini amat tepat. Baru pertama kali merasakan diri sudah jatuh cinta kepada USM. Membawa nama USM ke kejohanan-kejohanan besar seperti Kejohanan Sukan Majlis Sukan Universiti-universiti Malaysia (MASUM) membuatkan diri begitu rapat dengan tiga huruf keramat, 'USM'.


Tahun pertama terpilih mewakili universiti, terasa begitu banyak manfaat bergelar pemain varsiti. Penempatan asrama kini bukan lagi menjadi masalah, kerana menurut ketua pasukanku pada tahun itu, Nor Khalijah atau lebih sinonim dengan nama Kak Anja memberitahu, secara automatik pemain varsiti akan

mendapat tempat di asrama. Tambahan pula, pemain diberikan elaun ketika mewakili universiti ke kejohanan, dibekalkan dengan pelbagai kemudahan termasuk kelengkapan pakaian sukan, beg dan sebagainya.

Kehidupanku di menara gading lebih sinonim dengan sukan. Bukan tidak berminat dengan perkara lain namun cinta pada hoki membuatkan masa-masa terluang banyak dihabiskan di padang hoki. Saya kekal sebagai pemain hoki varsiti sehingga tahun akhir pengajian dan turut dilantik sebagai Ketua pasukan pada tahun terakhir di universiti. Satu pengalaman yang tidak akan dapat dilupakan.

Kini, sukan hoki sudah lama ditinggalkan. Bukan kerana sudah patah cinta, tapi dek kerana kesibukan tugas sebagai Pegawai Penerbitan di Pejabat Perhubungan Awam USM, minat saya terpaksa diketepikan. Tambahan pula dengan kehidupan masa kini yang menuntut lebih banyak masa, tenaga dan komitmen di tempat lain. Tugas di pejabat, tanggungjawab sebagai isteri dan ibu di rumah membuatkan saya akur dan terpaksa untuk 'menggantung kayu hoki'.

Pun begitu, kepuasan yang dicapai tidak terkata. Sehingga kini, nama-nama rakan karibku yang pernah sama-sama ketawa, menjerit, menangis, berdarah, berguling dan pelbagai lagi di Astroturf USM tidak pernah dilupakan. Ihtizam, Farah Mona, Kak Anja, Aida, Amanda, Sangeetha, Eezy, Ina, Nicky dan ramai lagi, kalian juga pasti tidak melupakan kenangan kita bersama. Adakalanya kami mengadakan pertemuan atau lebih dikenali dengan terma '*gathering*', semuanya diluahkan ketika bersama.

Kepada jurulatih yang lebih mesra disapa dengan gelaran Sir Bob dan Sir Noel, terima kasih kerana telah membimbingku tanpa jemu. Balai Berita Kampus juga tidak terkecuali meninggalkan kenangan manis buatku. Saya juga pernah bergelar wartawan di akhbar KOSMO! Semuanya atas didikan dan tunjuk ajar para pensyarah di USM, menara ilmu yang tidak akan pernah luput dari memori sampai bila-bila. 



Nor Rafizah Md Zain Alec Chin
B. Comm. '92

Photographs courtesy of Nawal Shahril

For this issue, The Leader held a cyber chat with Nawal Shahril (B. Comm. '08), an USM alumni residing in Kuala Lumpur, about her cross-cultural marriage to American husband, Valentino Chavez. Both shared with us the essence of embracing each other's differences and living life to the fullest, guided by the religious teachings.

Meeting each other

Nawal: I am a crafts-person, blogger and a fashion designer. Currently I am working on developing a sewing school online. I am married to Vito. He is from Colorado Springs, Colorado, USA. He is a grocer. We have been married for seven months.

We met in a Muslim matrimonial website called 'Half Our Deen' on 4 July 2011. We communicated over one month and he proposed. We have been on skype every day without fail as we were meant for each other. In September 2011, I booked a flight ticket to Colorado to meet this man of my dream. We were married in March 2012.

Cultural shock

Valentino: Definitely the squatting toilets. I have never seen them before. It was creepy and weird.

Nawal: I remembered he asked me enthusiastically about ways to use the toilet, "Should I take off all my clothes?" and things like that. It was funny.

Valentino: Minor clashes of perceptions; my hairstyle, body tattoos, wearing three quarter during prayers. There are more but you can ask Nawal's grandmother.



Love at first sight for the couple

Unforgettable moments

Valentino: Have you ever wanted something so bad and for so long that when it does happen it feels like a dream? That was how I felt the first time I saw Nawal in person.

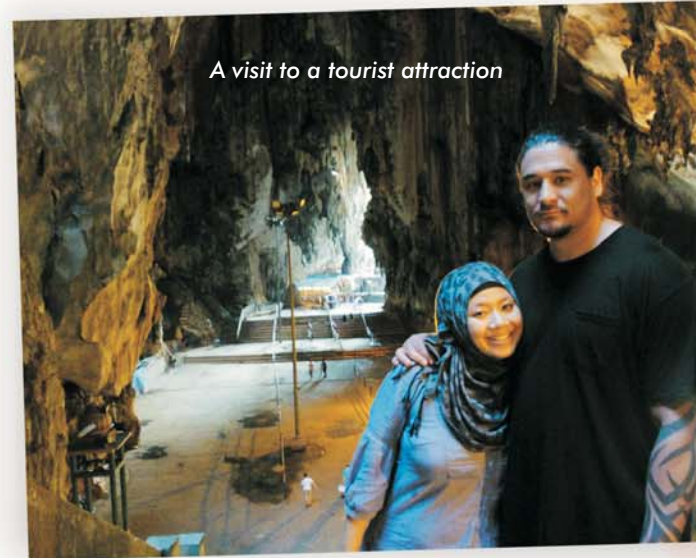
Centre of attention

Nawal: Surprisingly, no. People did not turn their heads to look at us when both of us are together.

Valentino: Nawal didn't attract any attention but I sure did. While in Malaysia, I did make some heads turn. I am an American, we love attention!

Value system

Nawal: We shared the same value system, that is the Quran. To put it simply, we operate by the book.



A visit to a tourist attraction



Happily married after meeting online



In the USA before he was married

Advice on cross-cultural marriage

Nawal: You will never see things through your partner's eyes or solve your relationship problems by becoming more alike in thinking. In fact, it is against the law of nature.

Valentino: We are different in genes, cultures, thinking. Moreover, men and women are wired differently. And most importantly, find someone who enriches your life, not simply reflects it. Differences are a good thing and they make life more interesting.

Favourites and differences

Nawal: Our favourites will be each other, McDonald and Islam. Other than that, we are different in everything. 🇲🇾



Nur Juliani Shafie, a Ph.D. student, with her team comprising Assoc. Prof Dr Shahrul Anuar Mohd Sah, Dr Nik Fadzly Nik Rosely with four students and three laboratory assistants set up three mist nets before sunset in a Balik Pulau fruit orchard. These nets are called 'mist nets' because the mesh is so fine that the nets appeared like mist when viewed from a short distance.

Bat Girl Hunts

Yong Chek Yoon

Photographs courtesy of Nur Juliani Shafie

All of these nets took about an hour to set up and when they were finally in place, each of them looked like an oversized volley ball net with a 2 m high fine nylon net stretched between two poles 6 m apart. Starting from 8.30 pm to 11.30 pm, they checked the nets hourly to see if any bat had been caught.

As the sun's last rays faded into the blanket of night, bats emerged from their roost and fluttered among the fruit trees to feed on either succulent fruits or insects. This was when the hunter became the hunted; some of the bats got entangled in the nylon nets while hunting for fruits and those caught were carefully removed to avoid causing any injury before they were measured and identified by members of the team. The bat species were identified by the size of the forearm and weight and therefore extra care has to be taken to ensure that the measurements were accurate to the nearest millimetre.

Balik Pulau was just one of the 30 sites where bats were caught. Other places that Nur Juliani went for her field study on Penang Island during the first and third week of the month included secondary forest and mangrove swamps. Her study over three consecutive days for each field trip was to determine the ecology and population distribution of fruit bats.



Nur (centre) with fellow researchers removing a bat from the net

Bat Girl Hunts

She told *The Leader* that the team did not apply any insect repellent during these field trips.

"We were so used to the presence of mosquitoes and other pesky insects that we managed to ignore their presence," she added.

Bats are interesting to study because they are the only mammals that can sustain a real flight as compared to others (such as flying squirrels) that, at best, glide for short distances. Despite their association with vampires in folklores, bats are an important link in the nature's food chain by keeping the population of insects down. However, not all bats are insectivores; most of the remaining 30 percent of them feed on fruits while a small percentage hunt for small mammals, fish, or amphibians.

"We studied the foraging behavior of fruit bats in their natural habitat," she said, pointing out that development and deforestation are fragmenting their habitat.



Macroglossus minimus



Cynopterus brachyotis



The mist net

Such developments are threatening bat populations as food resources diminished from the conversion of agricultural land to housing estates. Other factors include having toxic chemicals (herbicides and insecticides) entering the natural food chain such as when bats feed on fruits that have been sprayed with chemicals.

To have a better understanding about the habitat suitability of fruit bats, the team mapped the distribution of fruit bats on Penang Island using Geographical Information System (GIS) which made it possible to obtain a wide range of measurements that would be helpful in keeping track of such elusive nocturnal creatures.

Most of the ones that they caught are the lesser short-nosed fruit bat, *Cynopterus brachyotis*, and the long-tongued nectar bat, *Macroglossus minimus*, which feed on fruits and nectar. On the contrary to what farmers perceive of bats, insect-eating bats helped to control insect population as the bats need to eat insects amounting to at least half its body weight every night while the ones that feed on fruits aided flower pollination and the dispersing fruit seeds. Unfortunately, due to unfounded beliefs, farmers perceive bats as pests.



Identifying the bat species by measuring the body size

Bat Girl Hunts

For experiments, Nur Juliani took some of the captured bats back to a shack located behind the School of Biological Sciences. They were released and the role of odour and shape in relation to the foraging behavior of fruit bats was observed.

A cotton ball soaked with banana juice was hung from the shack's wire mesh roof while a ripe banana and a wax banana is hung nearby. The objective was to find out which of the three the bats would prefer more: banana juice-soaked ball of cotton wool, ripe banana or banana made of wax.

"We found that the bats were especially attracted to the cotton ball soaked with banana juice than to the banana itself," she said, adding that this further supports the hypothesis that bats respond more to odour cues than visual ones.



Hanging loose



Bat house at the School of Biological Science



Enjoying a banana meal




Bat feeding on banana juice-soaked cotton wool



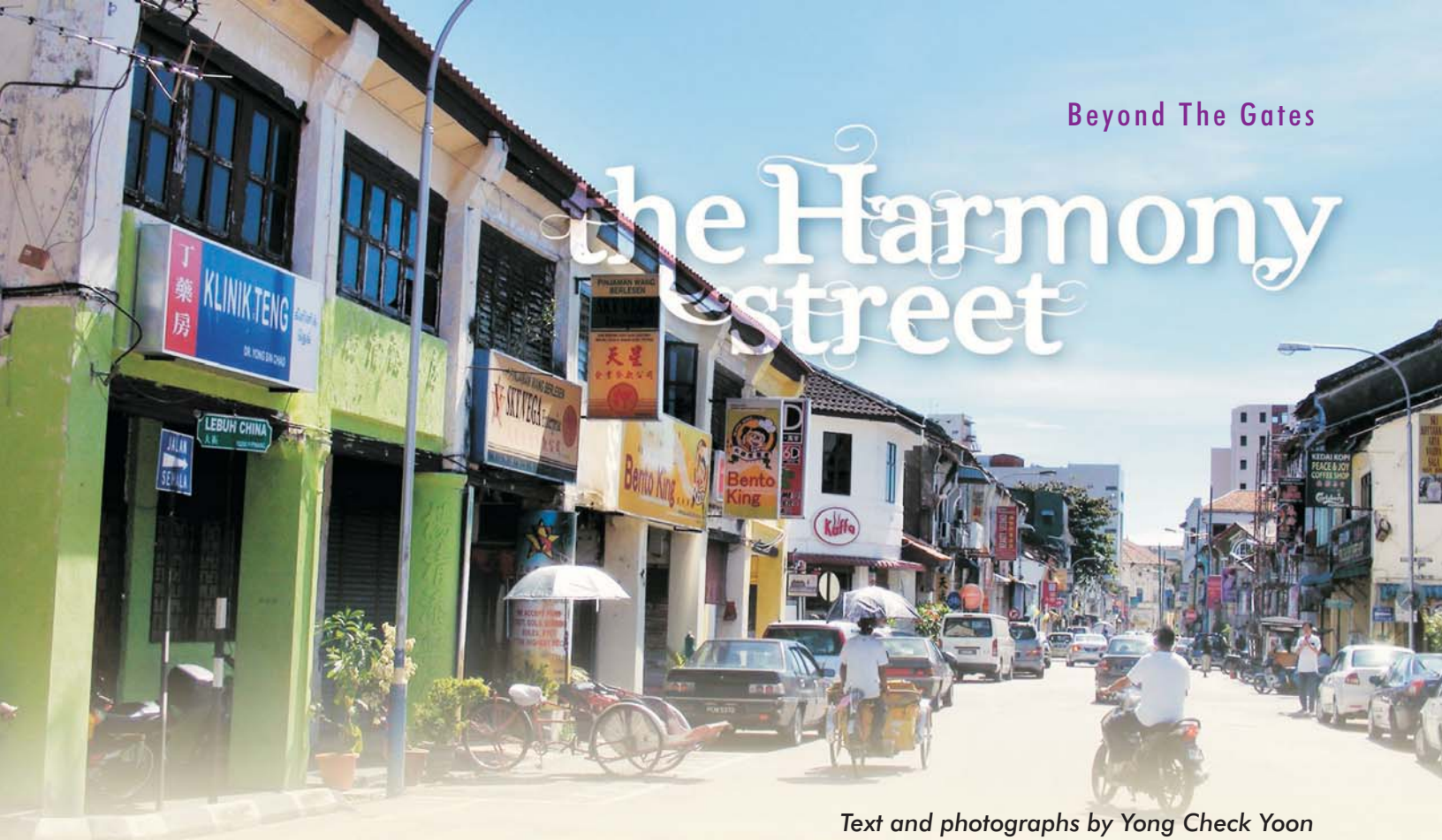
Nur during a field trip

They would suck the banana juice from the cotton wool. This choice of cotton wool rather than a fresh banana is likely because of a stronger odour of banana produced from an exposed cotton wool as compared to a banana with its skin on. It is known that there is an increase of chemicals produced by a fruit when it ripens and these chemicals give the fruit its distinctive odour.

Perhaps in the final analysis, we ought to ask ourselves if we can live without bats or if bats can live without us. We failed to protect their habitat and food resources. We gravely misunderstood them. The bats on the contrary, have helped humankind with flower pollination, dispersal of fruit seeds and controlling insect population. 

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

the Harmony Street



Text and photographs by Yong Chek Yoon

George Town has been cosmopolitan since its establishment in 1786 as migrants from all over the world converged to the fledging port. The town which first started from the tip of Tanjung Penaga (where the Esplanade is) gradually expanded to the Prangin Canal which was used to mark the 19th century town boundary. Pitt Street, now known as Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, was thus one of the early thoroughfares laid out.

With the area around the Esplanade being established as the British administration centre, a fast growing immigrant population grew along Pitt Street with various ethnic groups forming settlements along it. Such a unique settlement pattern exists till today.

To fulfill the religious needs of the British administrators and their families, the St George's Church was built in 1816. It became the first Anglican church in the country built with convict labour. There was also an Armenian Church at Bishop Street nearby which was later demolished.

Pitt Street is barely 700m long, starting from the junction of Light Street. Despite the short distance, it is a showcase of racial and religious harmony since the early days when inhabitants were busy eking out a living yet maintaining their religious and cultural identities.



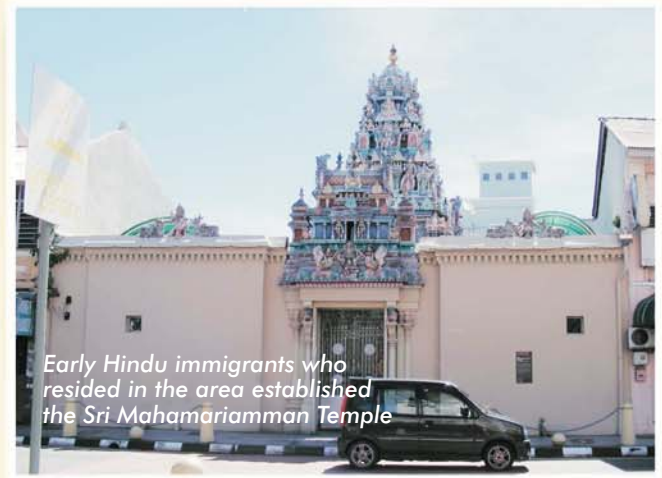
St George's Church was the first Anglican church in the country

The Harmony Street

Even before the construction of St George's Church and less than 150m away, Kong Hock Keong, better known as the Guan Imm(Goddess of Mercy) Temple, was constructed circa 1800. Its name is derived from 'Kong', abbreviated from 'Konghu' (Cantonese), and 'Hock' from Hokkien. Hence, it is a temple jointly managed by representatives from the two dialect group associations.

Located next to the temple the Penang Chinese Town Hall, established in 1881, where it provided a "diversified entertainment" from occasional visits by operatic and comedy companies to fortnightly meetings by Chinese community leaders. Initially the Guan Imm Temple took the role to look into the spiritual and secular needs of the Chinese community.

However, it failed in its role as a mediator with the outbreak of secret society wars since KienTek was predominantly Hokkien and Ghee Hin, Cantonese. Subsequently the Penang Chinese Town Hall was established to take up that role in addressing the secular needs while the temple continued to attend to the community's spiritual needs.



Early Hindu immigrants who resided in the area established the Sri Mahamariamman Temple



Kong Hock Keong served the Cantonese and Hokkien communities



A police station once stood in the middle of the road before it was narrowed to accommodate a service road and a row of stalls

The road fronting the temple is China Street and, as the name implies, is one of the earliest Chinese settlements since the arrival of a boatload of 500 settlers from Kuala Kedah led by Kapitan China Koh Lay Huan a few days after Captain Francis Light's landing.

Less than 170 m away stood the 'Mariaye Temple' (or rather a shrine) that was constructed in 1801 for the Indian community comprising the merchants, labourers, stevedores, and the sepoys. The enclave which is now known as Little India, is roughly bordered by Queen Street, Market Street, King Street, and Chulia Street which at one time was called Malabar Road. In November 1932, Straits Times reported that the shrine was demolished and was rebuilt as an elaborated temple, expected to be completed the following year. It was later renamed Sri Mahamariamman Temple.

The Harmony Street



Masjid Kapitan Keling, initially an attap house, served Indian Muslims working in the East India Company

The story about Pitt Street can never be complete without mentioning the existence of the Pitt Street Police Station which stood in the middle of the road from the Guan Imm Temple until the Chulia Street junction. It came with barracks attached. The completion of the police station was announced in 1874 and was demolished around 1932.


The police station was one of those built with fines collected from feuding secret societies in 1867. The nine-day 'war' between the two groups - Kien Tek Society and Bendera Merah on one side and Ghee Hin and Bendera Putih on the other - was about territorial control, extortion, collection of protection money and business rivalry.

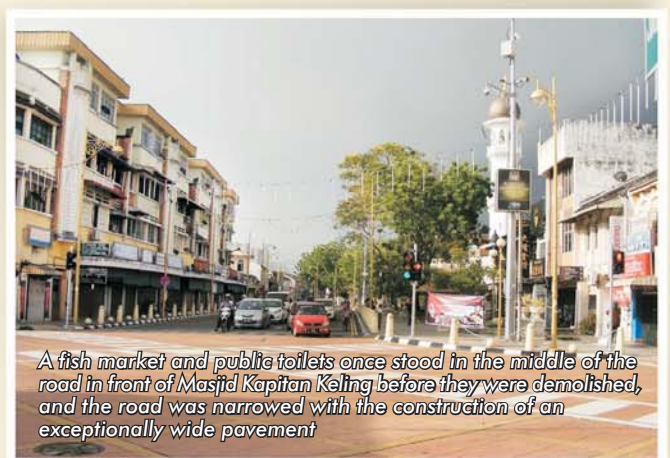
A stone's throw away from the Chulia Street junction is the Kapitan Keling Mosque which was constructed on part of the 18-acre land given to Cauder Mydin Merican, better known in his community leader capacity as Kapitan Keling (Captain of the Kelings). The mosque, originally built from attap, served the Indian Muslims who were attached to the East India Company. A few years later, the structure was demolished and rebuilt with bricks. What we see today is the result of numerous expansion works over the centuries.

It is little known that in front of the mosque, in the middle of the road, were a fish market, a public bath and toilet to serve the population of Indian Muslims

in the area. Buckingham Street separates the mosque from the mausoleum of Cauder Mydin and a small plot of old graves, surrounded by kampong houses during those early years. The unique feature in this village is the presence of a step-well, a concept brought here from India, with each side measuring about 24 m and a flight of steps leading to the pond below. Therefore, it is no surprise why the area around his mausoleum has been named 'Kampung Kolam' ('Village of the Pond'). Kampung Kaka is located next to it and it is, in all likelihood, the name referred to the Malabar Muslims because the word 'Kaka' means 'elder brother'.

During the early years, ponds and wells such as Kapitan Keling's step-well served the neighbouring community in terms of providing water for consumption, washing, bathing and more importantly bring individual families together at a common place for social interaction. The step-well of Kampung Kolam had been filled up and had been turned into a car park. Today only a handful of these antiquated wells survive and one of which is within the compound of the Goddess of Mercy Temple.

Despite having four different religious institutions within approximately a hundred metres apart from one another, the communities coexisted in harmony. They played an important role in bringing the communities together, particularly during festivals and celebrations. The various communities got along well. Various ethnic groups accepted one another for what they are along the 'Harmony Street'. 



Big-hearted Little Penang

Hamima Dona Mustafa
B. A. '73

Photographs courtesy of Yong Check Yoon

Cast iron depicting walks of life in Penang at Stewart Lane

Penang, as a port, gathers people from various parts of the world thus exposing its residents to a kaleidoscope of communities, of different ethnic origins, with their accompanying cultural ways. Multi-ethnic marriages among immigrants with the local women have been practised a long time ago, giving rise to a distinct group called the *Peranakan*. Under British rule prior to *Merdeka* or Independence in 1957 Penang had been one of the states known as the Straits Settlements where the chief administrator was a British governor, not a Malay *sultan* or ruler.

I was born in Penang and so were my parents and grandparents. My father worked with the Penang Port Commission. We lived in the hub of town, in a row of houses on Western Road (now known as Jalan Utama) closer to Dato Kramat Road. At the other end where the botanic gardens are residence of the Governor and his family. The neighbourhood was a 'mini Malaya' (the former name of the country before Malaysia was formed). My immediate neighbours were Chinese and Indians.

We lived in 31-B Western Road for seven years, since I was six years old, in 1955. My good friends were of Chinese origin, Amy and her brothers, Ah Tat and Ah Tee. Their mother and father worked at the General Hospital across the road. Amy and her siblings had an aunty who kept an eye on them. Through Ah Ee ('aunty' in the Hokkien dialect of the Chinese language) I picked up Hokkien sentences which meant, "Come home, it's raining," or "Come home and drink your milk." Amy dreaded these commands because she wanted to spend time at my house which was two doors away. She loved to play with my younger siblings. At the age of six I was the eldest of two younger brothers and two sisters, whereas Amy was the youngest in her family of four children. My mother continued

to give birth every year and when we moved from Western Road to Bukit Glugor I had eight siblings in tow.

Besides Amy's family I had good Indian friends living a stone's throw away from our back door. Anna, her sister and brother, also liked to play with me and my siblings. From this friendship I learnt some Tamil sentences, such as, "Anna, mother is calling you," or "Anna, your older sister wants you to come home with the baby."

In turn, Anna and her siblings learnt Malay sentences from my family and the other Malay neighbours. We played games that originated from the various ethnic groups such as 'police and thieves', *tok jengkek* (the Malay equivalent for hops scotch) and skipping rope. We skipped the rope in rhythm to an English song which began with 'Blue bell, cockle shell, eevy, ivy, over.' (Much later, when I attended Island Girls' School with the English language as the medium of instruction did I realise what the peculiar words were supposed to be, o-v-e-r, over). For 'police and thieves' we had to sing a Hokkien song at the beginning of the game which partly meant 'Who would be the police and who would be the thieves?'

Beyond the Gates

Big Hearted Little Penang

The adults have their own pastime. Amy's parents, Ah Ee and other Chinese friends liked to play *mahjong* on some nights.

Ah Ee and a Malay neighbour, Kak Esah, enjoyed their after-lunch chats, discussing the novels they have read that week or movies they had seen in the cinema halls. We children would hand them the movie circulars/flyers announcing forthcoming Hindi or Tamil movies at the Paramount or Royal cinema halls which we received from the Indian bicyclist who distributed them. These flyers were on single newsprint cyclostyled colour sheets that stained the fingers. It was quite an event when the cyclist came to our neighbourhood. We crowded around the bicyclist in such a boisterous manner. Those who did not get them chased after the man till he stopped and handed them a circular each.

Lining both sides of the road were a number of tricycles turned into mobile snack stalls. The vendors were also a mixed group. There was the Indian *cendol* man, Chinese *ice kacang* vendor, Indian *apom balik* (pan cake) seller, Indian Muslim banana fritter seller and Chinese fresh fruit seller. In the afternoon the Indian *roti* man would come by on his bicycle to provide us with freshly baked *roti* Benggali or Bengal bread, ten cents a loaf. We were also visited by the Indian Muslim man bearing an aluminium *kuih* or snack container on his head. He would have savoury as well as sweet snacks.

The Indian *roti* man sells popular bun spread with margarine and *kaya*
(photograph by Mohamed Talhah Idrus)

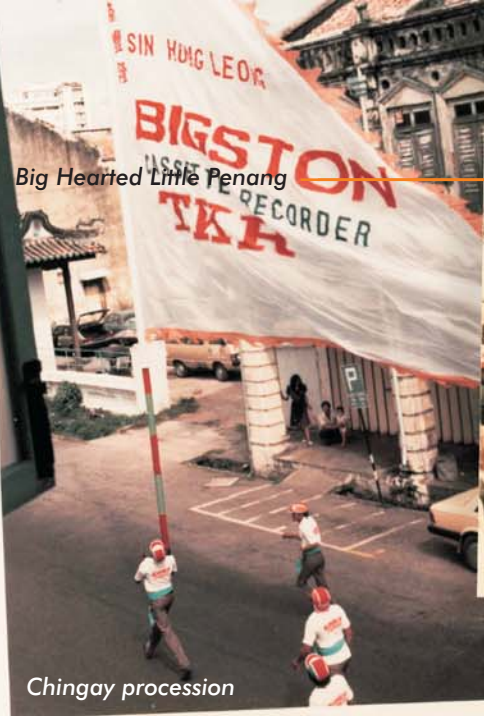


One of the movie flyers announcing a new P. Ramlee movie in the '60s (Source: National Archive, Malaysia)

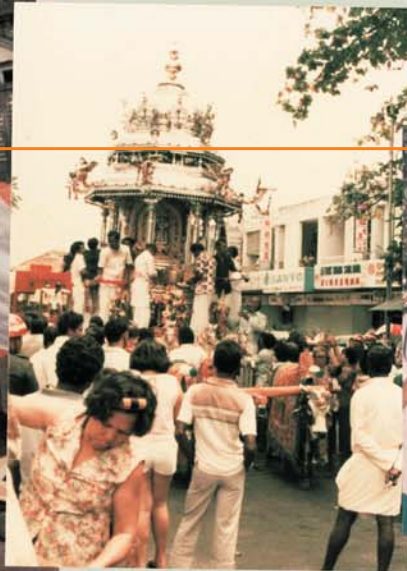
Our corner coffee shop was manned by an Indian man wearing a white dhoti around his waist and a white t-shirt. He sold freshly brewed coffee, *teh tarik*, and savouries such as curry puffs and *vade*, Indian lentil cakes. He also sold *bidis* (Indian cigarettes) as well as Western brands such as 'Rough Rider' and 'Craven A'. We children liked to buy 'Trebtor' sweets, two for five cents. The shop also sold pencils, erasers and small '555' notebooks.

Besides being able to interact easily with people from various backgrounds we, Penang residents, especially the Malays, are especially known for our use of English (sometimes the 'bastardised' version) words in our conversations. This was not unusual because Penangites were used to listening to the English language as they were in the service of the *tuan* (master, sir) or *orang putih* (white man) and the *ma'am* as *amah* (maids), drivers or gardeners. Words such as *gostan* ('go a stern'), *hope* (halt), *pintu gate* (gate) to differentiate it from *pintu* which means 'entrance' or 'door' were incorporated in the Malay language. We used *paper* to mean 'newspaper' to differentiate it from '*kertas*' (ordinary paper). Non-Penang Malays use the term *akhbar*. We use the word 'market' unlike people elsewhere who use the word *pasar*. That is one sure fire way of knowing who comes from Penang. *Mangkok* cup denotes 'trophy' as in the World Cup championship. Non-Penang Malays say *piala*. For Penang Malays *santribot* stands for 'sanitary board' whereas *mentoka* denotes 'motorcar.' Non-Penang Malays use the word, *kereta*. We use the word *feri* for the 'ferry' that shuttles passengers from Penang Island across the North Channel to Province Wellesley or *Seberang*.

Big Hearted Little Penang



Chingay procession



Taipusam



Christmas party

Apart from the richness of the languages and food, we also enjoyed the various celebrations such as Christmas, Deepavali, Chinese New Year, Taipusam and Chingay. My non-Malay friends were just as familiar with the Muslim celebrations of Eid ul Fitr and Eid ul Adha.

Every Christmas we would look up at the hospital veranda as we could see through the pillars the brightly lit Christmas trees. On Christmas eve we could hear carols being sung in the wards.

We also watched noisily as Ceylonese neighbours Sengor and Rosy hung the baubles and lights on their five feet tall Christmas tree in their little living room. I had to keep my little sister's chubby fingers from grabbing at the little angels and tinsel stars.


We were able to taste various cakes and cookies that accompanied the festivities. During Chinese New Year we got to taste the love biscuits or *kuih kapit* or *sepit*, *kuih bakul* or *tee kuih* from Beng Choo's family who lived closeby. For Christmas we were given great tasting butter cookies.

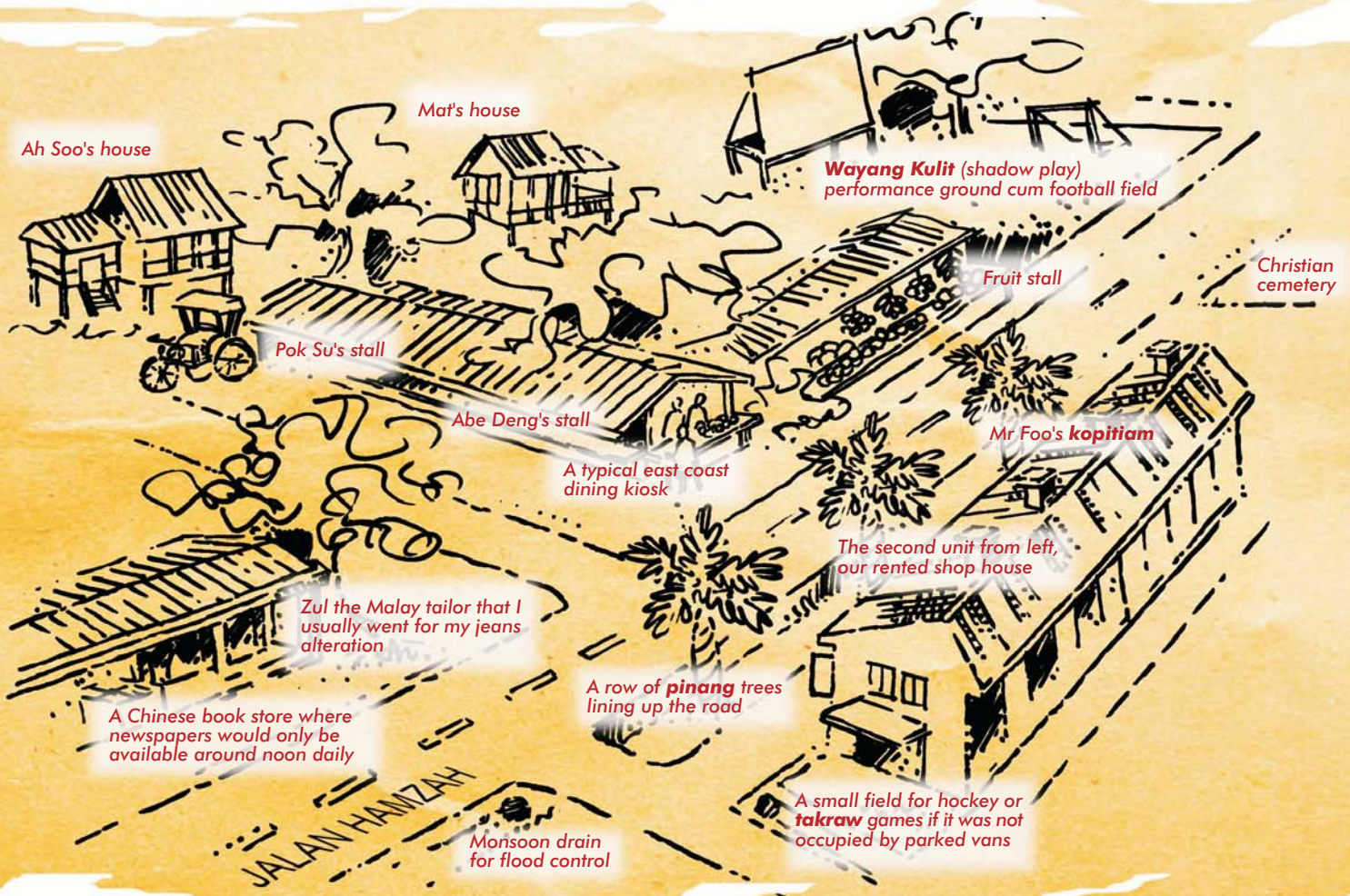
During Deepavali, the festival of lights, celebrated by my Hindu friends, Anna came to the house with a tray of sweet dhal desserts and festive cookies. My grandmother placed a cupful of sugar on her tray. In exchange, I asked her why and she explained it would be rude to return Anna and her mother an empty tray.

Another Hindu festival that we came to know was Taipusam. Western Road is the main thoroughfare where the chariot of the Hindu gods would have to pass in order to take them to the main temple close to the botanic gardens. The chariot would always stop by close to our house as it was the first main *tanneer phantal* (makeshift refreshment stall). As the chariot stopped a replica of a lotus flower hanging from above the *tanneer phantal* opened to display two plaster statuettes depicting 'fairies' with garlands of flowers to welcome the deity. The priests clad in white *dhoti* with gold colour belts round their waists riding on the chariot would receive the garlands and place them round the statuette bedecked with precious stones and gold. Coconuts were smashed to the ground as offerings. Devotees by the throngs who had waited for quite a while held up their trays of bananas, flowers and lighted oil containers to be blessed.

Penang is also known for its *Chingay* (carnival) procession which is synonymous with the display of the skill of Chinese bamboo pole bearers who held up the long poles by their teeth, among other feats.

Although one could drive around the island in two hours one cannot begin to measure the wealth of goodwill among the multi-ethnic people who populate this gem of an island. Perhaps its small size makes it necessary for everyone to get to know one another and to respect each other's cultural heritage. The first step is to get to know one another.

As the Malay saying goes, *Tak kenal maka tak cinta* which could be translated as 'to know you is to love you.' 



A Ke-la-te Story

Text and illustration by Alec Chin
B. Comm. '92

Photographs courtesy of Alec Chin

"So, you are from Kelantan ah?" A typical question whenever I met somebody from the west coast (of Peninsula Malaysia). The next enquiry will either be, "Not many Chinese in Kelantan, right? How do you survive?", or "Oh! Kelantan boy, show me your loghat ke-la-te (Kelantanese dialect)."

The list may go on and on but to me, it did not sound every bit an insult, rather, the queries served as an impetus to tell my story about this faraway land: a land that had been generalised as poverty stricken and has been tagged as one of the most backward state in Malaysia for decades.

For whatever reasons I am not aware of, my late parents, both Pahang natives, decided to build their home in Kota Bharu (the Kelantan capital city) in the early '60s. Being an enterprising and easy-going person, my father befriended the local Malays, *peranakan* Chinese and Siamese to jointly start his ventures in petty trades. Therefore, it was not unusual to see folks of various races patronising our shophouse at unit 3812, Jalan Hamzah, on a daily basis.



*My father taking a dip in an **tali air** (irrigation drain) besides paddy field*



*Getting ready to join other kids for a swim in the **tali air***

Being brought up in a traditional business family, each and every one of my nine siblings has been entrusted to mind the shop after school hours on a rotation basis. Other than the usual business acumen, some of the best lessons learned were ways to communicate with the different races in their own languages: Kelantanese Malay dialect, Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochew and even Siamese. Somehow, I felt the proper body language always won the day in closing a deal.

For example, it was best to approach the lady first whenever a Malay couple walked into the shop as the wife would always be the one making decisions on household needs; a common culture with the local Malays. Being sensitive and respectful of other cultures was the way of life. Amazingly, we did not have to rely on mega campaigns to promote racial harmony; the spirit of togetherness and tolerance were already inside us.

A few interesting characters whom I recollected vividly, the people I had shared part of my childhood days with, are listed below to give you a glimpse of the days I had enjoyed the most.

Pokcik Husin (Pakcik Hussein), my father's closest acquaintance in various business ventures. Originated from Pattani, Thailand, Husin was well-versed in both Malay and Thai languages. His elusive appearance sometimes puzzled me; he would always be there when my father needed him most, particularly in matters dealing with government agencies. Occasionally, he would pull me aside and pulled my nose, jokingly told me that he is trying to refine the ugliest nose a man should ever have, much to my siblings' amusement.



Celebrating 10th birthday at the upstairs of our rented shop house. Standing from left: my mother, brother Vei, me and my grandmother



From left: Me, elder brothers Foo, Loong and Vei. A studio shot in 1976

Mat, our family's resident carpenter and handyman, an artisan with few words. Once my mother threw him a challenge to construct our family altar. Not only did he complete the job beyond expectation, but painted a lively pair of dragon and phoenix as a bonus.

Pok Su (Pak Su), had the best *daging kerutuk* (dried curry beef) stall opposite our shophouse. The generous portion of *daging*, giant-sized fried anchovies and salted egg were the ideal feast for breakfast, lunch, dinner or even supper. Yes, Kelantanese eat rice for every meal. Other than *Maggi mee* (instant noodles), *Pok Su's nasi lauk* (rice with dishes) was the best 'tonic' to keep me awake during the preparations for important examinations.

Beyond The Gates

A Ke-la-te Story

Abe Deng (Abang Din), *Pok Su*'s neighbour, served the best *sup tulang* (ox bone soup) in town. He is my brother *Vei*'s close friend and both shared the common topic of stock investment. The friendship flourished through the years until *Deng* decided *Vei* was the right person to inherit his secret soup recipe. However, it did not come to pass as *Vei*'s decided to pursue his career in China.

Ah Teik, a god grandfather of mine. Then a 70-year-old *peranakan* Chinese with Siamese parentage, he spoke flawless local Malay and was well-versed in Southern Thai dialects. He took charge of my father's feed mill in Kuala Besut, a small fishing town bordering Kelantan and Terengganu. The mill also served as a place to accommodate workers of various races, mostly individuals held under *Akta Buang Negeri* (Restricted Residence Act). That was how 'inclusive' my father could be.



Rowing *sampan* during the massive flood hitting major parts of Kota Bharu in the mid '80s

Lau-pan (Mr Foo), a Hainanese running a typical east coast *kopitiam* (cafe) a few doors away from our house, where you could find packets of *nasi lauk*, *nasi dagang*, *nasi lemak* and *kuih* on every table during breakfast. Nevertheless, outside foods were allowed. Usually, you would find more Malay patrons than those of other races. My favourite seat was always a small table in the kitchen, chatting with *Meh* (Man), the chef cum barista, or simply observing him making coffee and frying *mee goreng* (fried noodles) over an old charcoal stove.



With my Form 1 classmates in SMJK Chung Hwa. Most of the Malay friends spoke fluent mandarin

Mek Si-eh (Makcik Siam), a local 50-year-old Siamese lady was my father's chief operator in salted egg production. Her son, *Aklong*, so capable a man that my father seemed to rely on him for many assignments. Both the mother and son could be quite chatty no matter how tough the situations were. From them, I learned the values of hard work and perseverance.

Ah Soo, the Chinese *teksi* (as Kelantanese called trishaw) peddler who married a local Malay lady. We chartered his service for trips downtown and occasionally to attend co-curriculum activities in school. Once, his *teksi* overturned when I tried pedal his trishaw, not only *Soo* did not get mad, he patted on my back and said, "*baguh mu cubo, buke se ne kayuh teksi ni* (it is good that you tried, you should know by now handling trishaw is not easy)."

Mejoh (Hamzah), the talkative Malay lorry driver and *Ah Ooi*, the quiet assistant, a *peranakan* Chinese. Both were ever willing to work beyond their job scopes and pressed on during the massive economic downturn in the mid '80s. "*Kalu begak kito samo-samo miko* (We share the heavy burden)..." A word of wisdom by *Mejoh*, which I can recall vividly until today.

Given the chance, I would love to mention many more colourful characters and encounters that had enriched my childhood in hometown Kota Bharu. *Joe Yi*, my 8-year-old son would lament whenever I relate the stories to him, "Daddy, I wish I can go back to your childhood and be your best friend, so that I will not miss any of the beautiful moments!"

Even without any artificial campaigns and reminders from the higher authorities, we can be a big harmonious family we once were. 🏡

Becoming Colour-Blind

**How parents can unite,
where politicians divide**

Lee Yu Chuang Photographs courtesy of
M.D. '91 Lee Yu Chuang

My grandparents came to Malaysia from Guangdong province in China with the clothes on their backs, and not much else. My paternal grandmother toiled as an itinerant hawker selling lai fun (rice noodles) until she could not work anymore.

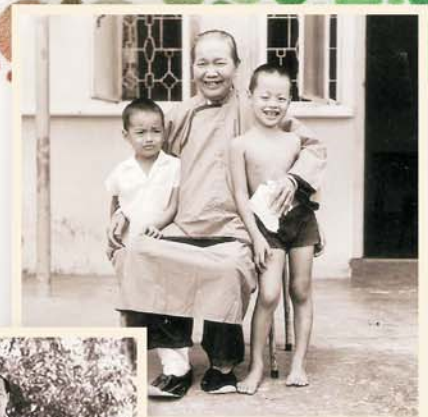
In spite of their disadvantages in life, my parents were the first in their families to complete a university education, both graduating as teachers of the Chinese language, which they imparted to generations of students. They both served faithfully in government schools until they retired.

My father and mother decided to bring us up in Penang, where we kids had a simple, happy childhood. We spent the evenings cycling around the neighbourhood with the local kids, having water-pistol fights in the backlanes at night, and kicking the ball around the playground whilst trying to avoid piles of cow pat that littered the field.

Like most first-generation immigrants everywhere, my parents were somewhat ambivalent in their feelings towards their motherland and their adopted land. For instance, when it came to badminton matches, they would vociferously support the Chinese team whenever they played on TV. But they never demanded that we shared their allegiance in sports, and in all other matters, they resolutely put their nose to the grindstone and concentrated on the business of putting food on the table. Most importantly, I never heard them belittle other races or people who were different from us.



My grandmother, brother and I (first from left)



Family photograph during an outing, with me on the far left

Through his actions, I came to learn that my father was a man of principles. Once, while taking a detour through a narrow *kampung* road, our car hit and killed a goat which strayed into our path. Although it would be more convenient to drive off and avoid any possible confrontations, my father alighted from the car to seek the owner of the lifeless animal, to make recompense. My father may not have realised it at the time, but this lesson left a powerful impression on me precisely because it was not meant to instruct.

When it was time to start formal schooling, our neighbour suggested that putting us in an English-medium school would give us a competitive edge in life. And thus, my elder brother and I were enrolled in St Xavier's branch school.

BECOMING COLOUR-BLIND: How parents can unite, where politicians divide

Novel experience

Growing up with an array of friends with names like Porrhamate, Ahmad Roslan, Surendra, Ronald Nieukey and Huah Ghee, I learnt not to give a hoot about somebody's skin colour but rather, whether they were decent folks and whether we could get along. And if we dropped by each other's houses during festivals, we would not feel any acute social discomfort. Rather, we would look forward to it with child-like anticipation of a novel experience—much like going to a candy store for the first time. I imbibed the pleasure of diversity as naturally as if it were fresh air.



With the scouts on an expedition

After getting good results and in deference to my parents' wishes, I continued my secondary education at Penang Free School. Although I missed my old friends, I quickly settled into my new surroundings and led a busy life with plenty of activities, especially with the Scouts.

With a never-say-die attitude, my Scouting buddies Hup, Prasert, George and I learnt that although you may need to take the tasks you perform seriously, you never need to take yourself too seriously.

I sat next to a boy named Hussain in Form Four, and apart from sharing the odd Hudson sweet in class (which I would break into two at the edge of our desk to share equally between us), we could also be found sharing the answers to our homework and scribbling all manner of nonsense in our little notebook, all while the teacher was conducting her lesson - oblivious to our shenanigans.

Oh yes, we still keep in touch, most recently for some paediatric advice, the man having been blessed with yet another baby in his ripe old age!

Form Six was memorable, probably because we had girls studying alongside us for the first time. I made many life-long friendships during that phase. When my close buddy Vijay got married later in life, I was deemed good enough to be his best man. And even though Azilah left for further studies in the US after only a few months of sixth form, we nurtured a kinship that continues between her family and mine until today.

Our band in school



Vicky and I got into the same medical school, and now she is my boss when it comes to child neurology. Being a paediatrician enabled me to be of some use to friends who decided to start their own families, and allows me to remain relevant in their lives, even with the distances that divide us.

With such an assortment of friends in my formative years, I had a mild cultural shock when I entered university and found the student population rather ethnically polarised. I observed that most students preferred to stick to their comfort zones and not venture outside their cultural perimeters. Nonetheless, it was an excellent opportunity to mingle and learn.

We were sequestered in the hardly developed corner (in those days) of Kubang Kerian. By day, we plied the hospital corridors, and staked out the lecture halls and university library trying to digest that extra ounce of medical knowledge. And by night, we battled the little green "palapes" insects that regularly paid us a painful visit!

BECOMING COLOUR-BLIND: How parents can unite, where politicians divide



Medical school comrades



Medical students community service group

I found that beneath the conservative dressing and orthodoxy of my Muslim course-mates, were some really sweet and gentle human beings who would be gracious and generous to a fault. Not that this should be confused with being pliant, I would hasten to point out, for people like Ghazaim and Haseenah could give as good as they got - both in humour and wisdom.

One searing memory was a community service project in which each medical student were hosted by a rural *kampung* family in Kelantan. The *pakcik* I stayed with had only an old rickety bicycle to move around with, ate his dinners by the glow of oil-light, and bathed directly from the well in his house compound. And I followed suit. Never had I known the bliss of such simplicity, and never had I received such kindness and graciousness such as I received from this humble *pakcik*. If only more of us got to know - truly reach out and know - how elegant the human spirit can be, even in cultures far removed from our own, the world would be a much much better place.

I met my first Kadazan friend ever from East Malaysia, Jessie - and I remember she had the most delicious accent ever. One of my room-mates was a guy called Malik, and fortunately, I found out he was a fan of music, which I was fond of playing out loud!

We were all bonded by the common task of getting through medical school without burning out. In reflection, perhaps that is what it takes to get people together - a common goal that transcends superficial differences.

Anyway, one thing that I can be sure of: being a doctor is a good way of becoming colour-blind. All doctors and nurses can attest that after you have witnessed enough sickness and death, you cannot help but realise that this is the fate of everyone of us.

Thus, with our scripts already written out and within the time that remains for all of us, how can we justify treating a fellow human being with less than deferential dignity?

When you have seen children battered to death by their parents or molested by trusted religious elders, you awake to the truth that good and evil is present in all of us, regardless of race, religion, gender or any other term we use to divide ourselves.

In the end, we are merely mortal beings with our mortal failings. All we can hope for is the chance to redeem ourselves with acts of kindness towards a fellow human being.

Now that I have children of my own, I pray that I am also imparting the right values and outlook to them. I try to speak of good individuals and good acts, bad individuals and bad acts, and I never use stereotypes.

I want to impress upon them that kindness is the basic tenet of all true religions. I hope they never grow up to speak uncharitably of any group of people by virtue of their external differences.

Our true value

At the most basic level, my children must know that we are all humans in need of the same things. For this reason, I want my children to understand that nobody should feel that they are above the poorest, most wretched people in the street. They were merely dealt a different set of cards, and it is only the luck of the draw that we are not in their place.

Nor for that matter should anyone feel that they are beneath the richest, most powerful royalty on earth. All are the same; all are human beings. Only our character will reveal our true value. Neither the colour of our skin nor the depth of our wallets will compensate for any moral deficiency.

Of course, as they grow, my children will bear witness to the disparities and unfairness inherent in society and life, and I will encourage their moral outrage to right these wrongs. They would need to be courageous in dealing with those who try to bully their way through, given that the person who shouts the loudest is not necessarily right. I would want my children to have a humble understanding of the human condition, and thus act with kindness in their dealings with all around them.

As a parent, and learning from other parents and my own, it is clear that our children's prejudices are modelled by and taught by us. If we consistently denigrate others with labels and derogatory words, it is only a matter of time before the poison seeps into our children's hearts, and breeds a generation filled with hatred and discontent. Compounded by the politician's tongue which is skilled but not necessarily wise, we will not only miss the forest for the trees, but in the tragic finale, set fire to our common abode - just to prove who's right.

We must change the only thing that we truly can - ourselves, to be the light that illuminates a better path for our children. We can drop the unproductive attitudes

that we grew up with, and choose instead to promote goodwill and kindness in a society where all can win and all who need help will get help, regardless of class, creed or ethnicity.

For all the politicians who have gotten it wrong, we can be parents who say: "No! You will not impose your vile prejudices onto my family, and we will not submit to leaders who do not make us stronger as a nation."

When we accept what true power we hold in our hands - the power to enlighten our children in their perception and thinking - then we will do the right things and say the right things to our children because their future depends on the direction that we set their sails to. It all starts with us.

It is ironic that now, with the passing of the years, and having dealt with thousands of children and their families, I have come to revisit the universal truth: that young children - if left alone - get along splendidly with almost

any other young children. They see others with a clear eye and an open heart.

They do not even bother to ask each other's names, only knowing that they delight in each other's company and that they will play to their hearts' content in their limited time together.

Theirs is a truly inclusive brotherhood. Theirs is the wisdom of the innocent. It is the parents who hurriedly grab them away, who tell them who they can and cannot play with, and who must be shunned - and thereafter, this child is forever stained with the pockmark of prejudice which is not easy to erase.

In the final analysis, it is clear that if there is one thing children can teach us, it is to strive to see with child-like clarity. For in the kingdom of the coloured, perhaps there is an advantage in being colour-blind. 🏳️

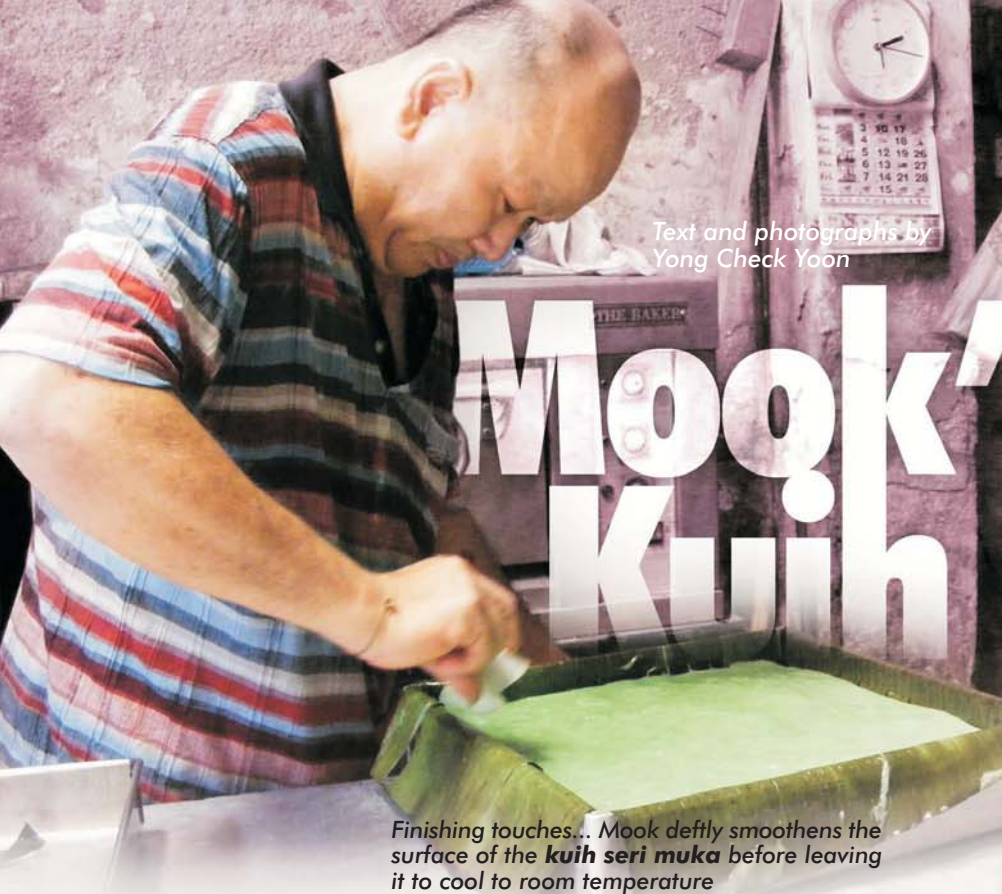
"Compounded by the politician's tongue which is skilled but not necessarily wise, we will not only miss the forest for the trees, but in the tragic finale, set fire to our common abode - just to prove who's right."

Text and photographs by
Yong Cheek Yoon

Mook's Kuih



The entrance to the shop



Finishing touches... Mook deftly smoothens the surface of the *kuih seri muka* before leaving it to cool to room temperature



Vijay pouring the dough for the final layer of *kuih lapis*

The unpretentious building at the cul-de-sac of Jalan Masjid, off Chulia Street, had seen better days just as the faded signboard announcing 'Kuih Nyonya Moh Teng Pheow' above its door. Second generation of *kuih* (cakes) maker, Mook Hian Beng, took over the business when his father, Teng Pheow, died in 1980. As Mook's son was not keen in taking over the business, he roped in his employee Karelím and his son, Vijay Kumar, to help.

"My father had sold *kuih* for Mook for more than 35 years," said Vijay. "When other sellers have either retired or had passed away, my father was eventually assigned to making cakes."

Until the late eighties, *Kuih Nyonya Moh Teng Pheow* was supplying to more than 20 sellers who would gather around the shop as early as 6 am to collect their cakes, and for some, *assam laksa* was an additional item. They would return to the shop at about noon to replenish their stock for their afternoon round which finished at about 6 pm. During those years, Mook and his team of 10 (inclusive his six siblings) have to wake up at 4 am to start preparing for the long day ahead. They also supplied *kuih* for celebrations, functions, and to hotels.

The *kuih* that they were selling include *kuih lapis* (layered cake), *kaya kuih* (also called *pulut tatai*), *kuih bingka ubi* (*kuih bengkok ubi*), *kuih talam*, and *popiah chee* (fried spring rolls). In the better years, they even offered *nasi kunyit* (glutinous rice with chicken curry). Vijay said that they only make *Siam Kuih* comprising three layers, yellow-green-yellow, when there is an order.

"We make about 10 types of *kuih*," said Mook, pointing out they can be relished by vegetarians with the exception of *kaya kuih* because the *kaya* has eggs as an ingredient.



Karelím preparing the dough for *kuih seri muka*'s top layer

Mook's *Kuih*

One interesting fact he highlighted was that *kaya kuih* was also known as '*kah tak kuih*' and this literally means 'feet (*kah*) stepping (*tak*) *kuih*' in Hokkien. Mook explained that it was traditional for the steamed glutinous rice to be compressed in a mould by stepping on a metal plate placed within the mould.

"All the *kuih* that we made are prepared a day before delivery because they might be too hot and soft if cut any earlier," he told *The Leader*.

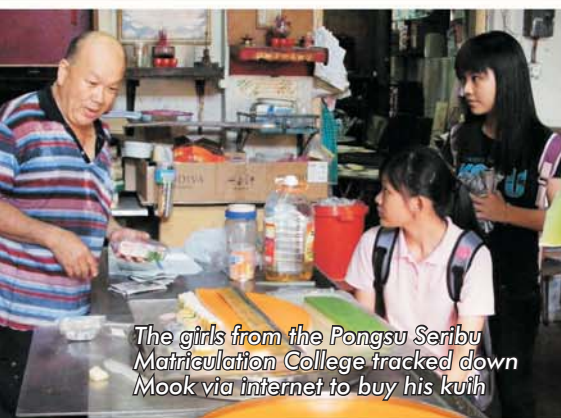
These *kuih* were originally sold from two large bamboo baskets slung from both ends of a *kandar* pole carried on the shoulder. Some sellers may have an additional charcoal stove to heat up the *assam laksa* soup. They walked from street to street shouting out '*kuih*', stopping on five-footways for potential customers to browse through the range of delectable *kuih* or even have a bowl of steaming *laksa*. However, other sellers opted for a large tray of a variety of *kuih* balanced on the head. Later, bicycles, pushcarts and motorcycles were used as sellers were able to cover a larger area.



An antiquated oven that was later replaced by stainless steel modern ovens



Vijay pouring the green dough onto the glutinous rice layer of the *kuih seri muka*



The girls from the Pongsu Seribu Matriculation College tracked down Mook via internet to buy his *kuih*

Kuih Talam

Kuih Bingka Ungu



Pulut Tatai

Chai Thau Kuih

Kuih Lapis

According to an interview with V. Balakrishnan in 1988, he told a journalist that he earned about RM250 every month from selling *kuih*. To get a perspective of what RM250 was, Balakrishnan was able to send money back to his wife and two children in India, and was able to visit them occasionally by ship at a cost of RM600 before 1981!

Times have changed. Other than orders from hotels and people celebrating momentous events in their lives, there are few orders in between. As Mook was being interviewed by *The Leader*, four girls from the matriculation college at Pongsu Seribu, Kepala Batas, walked in and bought cakes. One of the girls, Chow Chin Yin, said that they found information about the shop on the internet and were glad that they found it. 🇲🇾



V. Balakrishnan, the *kuih* seller

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



CoM Mayor's Visit

City of Mandurah (CoM) Mayor, Paddi Creevey OAM, and her delegates paid a working visit to USM, signed a Memorandum of Understanding, and presented a talk titled *Leadership & Community Engagement: The CoM Experience* on 4 October. CoM is 70 km from Perth, Western Australia.

Space

Penang With NASA's Space Festival 2012, featuring lectures and workshops, was launched on 29 October at the SAINS @ USM Complex, Bukit Jambul. The programme was jointly organised by Division of Industry and Community Network (BJIM), and Northern Skill Development Centre (NSDC). The exhibition attracted more than 30,000 visitors.



Ambassadors Summit

World Ambassadors Summit 2012, themed "Bridging Global Collaborations", was held from 14 to 15 September at USM Penang. It was attended by ambassadors and education attaches from 12 countries.

International Netball Tournament

The 22nd USM Netball Festival-Penang International 2012, held on October 13 and 14 at USM Sports Stadium, attracted about 160 teams, including those from Brunei, Taiwan, Sri Lanka, India and Singapore. It featured five categories: USM (men and women); Higher Learning Institutions (men and women); Under-12, Under-15 and Under-18.





46th Convocation

USM's 46th Convocation Ceremony was held from the 19 to 23 September at Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra. About 4,700 undergraduate and postgraduate students received their degrees over nine sessions, five of whom became the first to graduate with Masters in Nuclear Medicine in Asia.

KADS1M

Representatives of first year students received Kad Diskaun Siswa 1Malaysia (KADS1M) on their behalf in a ceremony at Dewan Tuanku Syed Putra on 23 November. The card enables the students to receive up to 60 per cent discount on products and services from 200 participating companies nationwide. USM Co curriculum Day, organised by Students Affairs and Development Division, was also launched.



Putting Jazz in Your Life

The 16th USMJB annual concert, themed USM Jazz Band Plays R & B, was held on 23 and 24 November 2012 at the Dewan Budaya Auditorium. It featured R & B songs of the 50's to the 90's and songs that were played with a mix of modern and traditional musical instruments.

Uphill Challenge

Some 300 participants from amateur and professional cyclists from all over the country took part in the USM Mountain Bike Challenge 2012, starting from USM Padang Kawad on 4 November. The 30-km route took them through various terrains up to Paya Terubong before returning to USM.





Razak Lajjis
B. Sc. '82
Director,
National Poison Centre,
USM, Penang



Kwok Kum Fai
B. Sc. '84
Teacher,
SMK Convent Green Lane,
Penang



Abdull Aziz Ahmad
B. Soc. Sc. (Economics) '90
Managing Director,
Viable Intact Sdn Bhd
Ipoh



**Paramasiwam Iskandar
Abdullah**
M. Ed. '92
Deputy Dean,
Masterskill College of Nursing
and Health (Kuching),
Sarawak



Tan Ewe Hoe
B. Sc. '93
Public Relations Office,
USM, Penang



**Wan Mohd Nazmee
Wan Zainon**
B. Comp. Sc. '99
Lecturer,
Sch of Computer Sciences,
USM, Penang



Mohd Rozaiman Aziz
B. Eng. (Mech. Eng.) '00
Lecturer,
Mechanical Engineering Faculty,
UiTM Pulau Pinang,
Penang



Ruhizal Roosli
B. Sc. (HBP) '01
Lecturer,
Sch of Housing, Building &
Planning,
USM, Penang



Lee Hooi Ling
B. App. Sc. '01
Lecturer,
Sch of Chemical Sciences,
USM, Penang



Mohd Rodin Che Yusoff
B. Comm. '03
Assistant Registrar,
Sch of Medical Sciences,
USM, Kubang Kerian,
Kelantan



**K. Rajasekaran
Kanagarajah**
App. Sc. (Bio.), '03
Senior Assistant Manager,
Public Affairs Department,
Masterskill University College of
Health Sciences, Selangor



**Mohd Nizam
Mohd Razak**
M. Sc. '04
Principal Civil Engineer,
Development Office,
USM, Penang



**Mohd Remy Rozainy
Mohd Arif Zainol**
B. Eng. '04
Lecturer,
Sch of Civil Engineering,
USM, Nibong Tebal



Baharuddin Ibrahim
B. Pharm. '05
Lecturer,
Sch of Pharmaceuticals
Science,
USM, Penang



**Nurul Hashimah
Ahamed Hassain Malim**
B. Comp. Sc. '05
Lecturer,
Sch of Computer Sciences,
USM, Penang



**Syarifah Mashita
Syed Mohamad**
M. Sc. '05
Lecturer,
Sch of Computer Sciences,
USM, Penang



Lim Tiam Chai
B. Sc. (HBP) '06
PhD candidate at
Tsing Hua University,
Beijing



**Puganeshwary
Palaniandy**
B. Tech. '06
Lecturer,
Sch of Civil Engineering,
USM, Nibong Tebal



Muhammad Iqbal Ismail
B. Sc. (Aerospace Eng.) '06
Assistant Director
Sarawak State Development
Office, Implementation
Coordination Unit (ICU),
Kuching, Sarawak



Pushpanathan Krishnan
B. A. '06
Teacher,
S.K. Jln Hamilton,
Penang



Shahrill Ramli @ Romli
B. Sc. (Microbiology) '07
Teacher,
SK Serendah,
Selangor Darul Ehsan



Amirul Al-Ashraf Abdullah
Ph.D. '07
Senior Lecturer,
Sch of Biological Sciences,
USM, Penang



Norhayati Ayit
M. A. (Literature) '10
Lecturer,
Institute of Teachers Education,
Penang



Loh Chee Hoo
B. App. Sc.
(Applied Statistics) '12
Teacher,
SMJK Chung Ling,
Penang

Open house Malaysian style strips away race and creed.

