



*Master Degree Programme students at AEI*

## Commencement of the Master Degrees Programme for the Academic Year 2003-2004

*By MANIQUE A.E. COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant*

The 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2003 was an important date in the Asia-Europe Institute's calendar as it marked the commencement of the second academic year of the International Master Degrees programme. Students from various parts of Asia-Europe will be following the International Master Degrees programme for the academic year 2003-2004. For the first time we welcome the presence of the students from Africa, South Asia and the Middle East to the graduate studies programme.

The event started with the arrival of the Chief Guest, Professor Datin Dr. Roziah Omar, Dean Postgraduate Studies, (IPS) University of Malaya, accompanied by Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib, Executive Director of the Asia- Europe Institute, University of Malaya, Professor Omar Farouk, the External Examiner from Hiroshima University, Associate Professor Dr. Shamsulbahriah Ku Ahmad, Deputy Executive

Director, Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya and the Co-ordinators of the International Master Degrees Programme, Professor Antony Bryant from Leeds Metropolitan University and Professor Fernando Rodrigo from Universidad Autonoma de Madrid.

One of the objectives of the Asia- Europe Institute is to enhance Asia- Europe relations and partnerships through dialogue and cooperation in the field of higher education. In this respect the Asia- Europe Institute and University of Malaya (UM) regard the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the Master Degrees programme as yet another step forward in active collaboration with ASEM member countries and its universities.

In his welcome address Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil shared with the new students his thoughts on what they will go through in the Institute: at times moments of sheer delight, and others moments of absolute anguish and

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*Students engrossed in a conversation with Dr. Shaharil during tea-break*



*Address by Professor Datin Dr. Roziah Omar, Dean of Postgraduate Studies, University of Malaya*

utter despair. The Executive Director however assured the students that there will be a pool of academicians who will be assisting them in whatever trials and challenges they may experience. He also advised the students to look at the experience of university life “as a journey.” More than the class room it is “outside the classroom in fellowship which is going to make the difference” he added. Professor Shaharil was also of the opinion that the students have “come to an Institute that brings Asia and Europe together, to an Institute that does not belong to Malaysia alone.” He said that Asia-Europe Institute is only Malaysian in initiative. What is more important is the idea itself. He then welcomed the new students, with these words, referring to the establishment of the Asia-Europe Institute: “The idea belongs to the future and the future is you.”

The students were next addressed by the Dean of Postgraduate Studies, Professor Datin Dr. Roziah Omar. She welcomed them to the University of Malaya. They were reminded that they have come to the “best University in the region” and introduced them briefly to international stature of the University and the cultural background and the diversities of people they will be interacting with in Campus and on the streets.

On this note the guest and students adjourned for a short coffee break at which networking and handshakes showed promises of a year of global citizenship here in Asia-Europe Institute.

The students were next briefed on the procedural matters related to their programme, followed by a briefing by the two Programme Co-ordinators for the International Master Degree in Information Management and the International Master Degree in Regional Integration. The event came to a close with the students registering for their respective degree programmes and with lunch in the Institute’s premises. ■

# A Briefing for Ambassadors of ASEM Countries at the Asia-Europe Institute

By MANIQUE A.E. COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant



*Dr. Shaharil briefing the audience*

A briefing for ASEM Ambassadors at the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) was held on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2003, as a step closer to the process of realising the commitment to establish the Asia-Europe University (AEU). The meeting resulted in a rich and constructive discussion as well as support for the ASEM Conference project which will be jointly convened by the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Malaysian Ministry of Education and the Asia-Europe Institute as the first step in the process of realising the Asia-Europe University (AEU).

The briefing consisted of two important aspects of the Asia-Europe Institute, namely:

1. To update on the progress made by the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)
2. The proposed ASEM Conference: "Towards the Asia-Europe University"

The meeting was chaired by Y. Bhg. Professor Dato' Dr. Hassan Said, the Director for Higher Education at the Ministry of Education. Representatives from the Malaysian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Malaysian Ministry of Education were also present at the meeting.



*H.E. Jurgen Alfred Robert Staks (left), Ambassador, Federal Republic of Germany*

Y. Bhg. Professor Dato' Dr. Hassan thanked all for their presence at the meeting, and began the session by inviting Y. Bhg. Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib, the



*Part of the audience during the briefing*



*H.E. Thierry Rommel (third from left), Head of Delegation, Delegation of the European Commission to Malaysia; on his left, H.E. Romualdo Ong, Ambassador, Republic of the Philippines*

*H.E. Bruce Elliot Cleghorn (left), High Commissioner, British High Commission, with Professor Dato' Dr. Hassan Said, Director of Higher Education, Ministry of Education, Malaysia*



*H.E. Jurgen Alfred Robert Staks, Ambassador, Federal Republic of Germany stressing a point*

Executive Director of the Asia-Europe Institute, to speak about the Institute and invited comments and questions from the Ambassadors present.

Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil in his opening remarks described the objectives, the organizational chart and the infrastructure of the Institute. He also briefed those present on the Asia-Europe Institute's academic programmes.

Dr. Patricia Martinez, Senior Research Fellow at the Institute briefed on the conceptual rationalisation, the objectives, the focus and the structure of the forthcoming conference.

The meeting ended on a note of strong support expressed by the ASEM Ambassadors for collaboration toward a successful outcome in convening the Conference towards the Asia-Europe University which is to be held from 8-10 December 2003 in Kuala Lumpur. ■

## A Lecture by Prof. Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib

# Monsoon Asia

The University of the Philippines Center for International Studies held its Public Lecture Series 4 on 28 August 2003 2:30 pm at the UPCIS Benton Hall AVR Room C. The lecture on Monsoon Asia – Networks of culture and trade was delivered by Prof. Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib, Executive Director of the Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya.



The audience of more than 80 who came to listen included essayist Mr. Arnold Azurin and Professor Jerry Respeto of the Ateneo de Manila University, students, faculty and staff of the UPCIS, other colleges of the university. They came despite the heavy downpour as the lecture was about to start.

Based on the reactions gathered from

The event was in connection with AEI's contribution to the course-faculty sharing project among ASEAN universities in the teaching of SEA 30. Through the initiative of the Asia-Europe Institute of the University of Malaya and the assistance of Dr. Adrian Lapian, University of Indonesia and Dr. Charnvit Kaset Siri, Thammasat University, SEA 30 was instituted in our universities as a common course to be taught by Southeast Asian professors and will be offered alternately by participating universities starting with the University of the Philippines. Team-teaching by professors from the region gives a new dimension to the course specially so when the instructors are transmitting knowledge about their own histories, societies and cultures.

SEA 30: ASIAN EMPORIUMS – Networks of Culture and Trade is an introduction to the world of monsoon Asia as formed by interaction between its peoples throughout the centuries, people who have moved all over the region, specially for the purpose of trade, but also for other reasons such as pilgrimages, in quest of the 'white elephant', and other symbols of prowess and prestige, in search of medicinal herbs, to escape from clusters of tradition, but also for sheer adventure. Port and market places became the meeting places of a variety of peoples and cultures, creating a cosmopolitan world that predates the present era of globalization.

It was designed for students to take the initiative to know their neighbours or even themselves. The course will familiarize students with the cosmopolitan world in which all kinds of trans-cultural and multicultural dialogues have been taking place, gradually assuming global dimensions which we are experiencing today from the perspective of Southeast Asians.

The lecture was attended by students of SEA 30, 2 sections, JS 100 (Japan Studies) 2 sections, faculty and staff of the CIS and other colleges in the University of the Philippines.

students, it would be safe to say that the lecture was a success. Here are some of the excerpts:

1. If his essay proved much of his erudition particularly with Monsoon Southeast Asia, Dr. Talib's lecture was far more evidential. Not only did he bequeath us with new look into formal learning, I thought everything I 'consumed' and absorbed was enough for a 'nutritious education'. I thought I knew much about my country and the world. But after the lecture, I soon realized that I was subconsciously looking up to the Pacific. I realized that real progress is within Southeast Asian relations.

*A reflection on Dr. Talib's lecture*  
by **Hosneya Mangotara**

2. When I arrived, Dr. Dato Shaharil – considered a Southeast Asian hero by many in our class for his essay "History Unplugged" – was already in the middle of his discussion on Monsoon Asia. Quite frankly, he was not the Dr. Shaharil that I pictured he would be. The man discussing in front was a short, skinny man with a thick but balding head – quite very ethnic Malayan look, on my judgment. On the other hand, I pictured the hallowed author of "History Unplugged" to be a robust man, with a strong built and a somewhat light color(ed skin). On what basis? He was scholarly and spoke/wrote good English in his essay. Blame it on colonial mentality and bad judgment (I may be guilty this time), but I thought that the man who had good English in him would look more "mestizo-hin".

... If there's a single thing that I learned from Dato Dr. Shaharil...we should see ourselves, together with our Malaysian, Indonesian and Thai (among others) brothers, as Southeast Asians.

*I am a Southeast Asian*  
by **Ralph Jordan Poserio Navarro**

3. Prof. Shaharil Talib's lecture was really new to me, in the sense that it evoked the Asian Loyalty in me. Before, I neglected the fact that I was Asian since all I thought about was more of the west. However, while listening to Prof. Shaharil Talib's lecture, I suddenly realized my worth as a native of this region.

**Aileen C. Pahinga**

4. It was truly a fulfilling experience to witness and listen to the words of Dr. Shaharil Talib.

His works alone could not even come close in describing his knowledge, experience and passion on Southeast Asia. Unlike other speakers I have listened to, Dr. Shaharil is so spontaneous and he really catches his audience's attention and interest effortlessly. He also seems very friendly and I like the way he accommodates questions from his listeners. I was also touched when he mentioned his wonderful insights and experiences in our country. He has spoken well of the peoples of Mindanao particularly of the Tausugs and places in the Philippines like Palawan and Zamboanga ...

I also realized that intermarriages proved to be a useful tool in disseminating culture, beliefs and systems from one group of people to another. Intermarriages secured the powers and controls of our ancient leaders. Although Southeast Asia is divided into many factions I believe that our available resources such as bird's nest, shark's fin and our linked cultures unite us strongly. I was also amazed with the trivia that it took three imperial powers to finally abolish the rule of the Tausugs. Even the Bugi men from Sulawesi and Java Sea, who are known to be notorious, avoided encounters with the Tausugs because they feared for their lives. Tausugs earned much respect for their military might and maybe with this information, we can better understand their ways of living and nature.

**Mesa, Ma. Monette F.**  
(BS Econ, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

5. I am happy because at last I finally met one of the persons I most admire. He was the author of an article about which I wrote a reaction paper. As for me, there is only one point in that paper and the lecture he delivered, and that this is the proof that Asia deserves to be the centre of the world. He also said that there are many things or reasons why we can be proud of our region.

**Castro, June Carla R.**  
(BS Psychology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

6. The Malay professor started off by locating our place in the world. In the course of his discussion, he builds up

Asian essentiality, moves on to point out the strategical location of Southeast Asia, then ends by encouraging national rediscovery. This talk by Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib made my regional pride soar.

**Tanalgo, Klarriness P.**  
(BA Sociology, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

7. However, it was the latter part of Professor Talib's lecture that struck me the most. He, as in his paper, noted the fact that the world order that emerged after World War II was shaped by the West especially in Bretton Woods. As a result of the plans of Keynes, MacKeander, Morgenthau, and White, all the various world institutions, which continue to exist to the present, were created and established. It would be nice if

each of these institutions actually operated to help the impoverished countries of the world. Unfortunately as Professor Talib noted, none of them actually work selflessly. An example is the 10-year plans of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which Professor Talib referred to as nothing more but a money lender. For each 10-year plan that the various Southeast Asian nations



*Dr. Shaharil with students from the university*

placed, the IBRD only thought of how much money they were going to lend and, eventually collect with added interest, of course. All this, sadly further disproves the notion of altruism in mind. In a more Southeast Asian context, it's disheartening to know that the region had to rely on such money lenders that did nothing more but further push the various countries into even deeper debt.

**Abala, Anthony**  
(BS Psych, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

8. It was a different kind of happiness that I felt when I saw our visitor that afternoon. If he were not talking, but was just among us and no one said that he was our guest, I would have thought that he was a professor here in the University of the Philippines. It is gratifying that he looks like a Filipino.

He discussed in his lecture about Southeast Asia and the expanse it occupies on earth. I could not help but be embarrassed yet proud that he knew more things about the seas and islands of the Philippines specially in Mindanao than me who is a Filipino. The wrong patronizing attitude or is it boasting of the people from Luzon also dawned on me when in fact that Mindanao is actually richer in culture and history. Professor Shaharil explained that Mindanao was once part of a kingdom here in Southeast Asia. As for the tribes that lived in our islands, their bravery and strength of power are really admirable....

I wish many of us Filipinos were more like him who

possess such qualities. Professor Shaharil opened for me several points and realizations. In the little way and the short time of my listening [to him] so many things changed, so many opportunities are being opened for the youth like us who hold the future of our country and of Asia rising again in our hands.

**Macenas, Joanne Christine E.**  
(BS Psych, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

9. Finally the person our class has long been waiting for, Dr. Shaharil, one of those credited for creating the foundations in the course on Southeast Asia, has given new information to us young Asians. It is true that one can learn many things from Dr. Shaharil. And with the many information Dr. Shaharil imparted to us, three points were impressed in my mind. First, is the potential and wealth that Southeast Asia possesses. Second is the interference and the influence of the west specially America and England in Southeast Asia, and finally, is the incapability of the Philippines to take care of her national documents.

**Buenafe, Fides Ma.**  
**Aileen V.**  
(BS Psych, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

10. First I planned not to attend the Alternative Classroom Learning Experience, because I wanted to take a rest after a few hectic weeks. Someone told me that Shaharil Talib, one of the Professors in University of Malaya who advocated the creation of the Southeast Asia 30 course will give a lecture. Forgoing at most four hours of my rest time, I rushed to the CIS, the venue of the lecture.

**de Vera, Cecile G.**  
(BSE Chemistry, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

11. August 28, 2003 was really a challenging day for me. That morning was the deadline of our 10 to 14-page final paper for Ms. Labrador, so I was still kind of bummed because I lacked sleep. That afternoon was a mixture of tension and excitement.

Tension because my groupmates and I were really busy finishing our entry for the exhibit. Excitement because for the first time, I would be able to see the person my teacher is so fond of talking about, Professor Dato' Shaharil Talib, and that he would be able to see our masterpiece....

The most interesting part for me was the discussion on Sabah. He told us that he doesn't want to be biased and that he's careful with his words because he's talking to Filipinos.

**Sangalang, Michiko**  
(B PE, 3<sup>rd</sup> year)

12. At first seeing Professor Talib, I was surprised by his "humble" appearance and even mistook him for a Filipino. But then, when he started to talk, his knowledge of the subject he had studied for so long took me aback and I sat there wondering if he really knew his stuff and didn't just look it up on the Internet a few days before the lecture. This opened the world of Prof. Shaharil Talib. Honestly some of the things he explained, such as the Choking Straits and the Indonesia-Malaysia territorial dispute before were new to me. I guess in order to understand some of the things he was talking about you had to have reached a certain level



*"Hands across the seas". Prof. Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib (left) with Mr. Arnold Azurin, "free-lance" historian, folklorist, ethnographer and Fellow at the Centre for Integrative Development Studies, University of the Philippines*

of knowledge of Southeast Asia, which obviously, I haven't reached. This concludes my point: his world is my world too. And I should try and learn more about my world, again, not as a Filipino, but as a Southeast Asian....

One phrase that Dr. Talib stated stuck in my head as he lectured on. He said that history is an ideology. The ideas of prominent people in the past molded what turned out to be a distinct culture of Southeast Asia. This goes for religion, trade, government, the arts, and other aspects of Southeast Asian living. The study of these ideas may help in creating new ideas for the betterment of our region. ■

**del Prado, Immanuelle**  
(BA European Languages, 2<sup>nd</sup> year)

# Presentation by the Multimedia Development Corporation at the Asia-Europe Institute

By MANIQUE A.E. COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant



*Puan Najat Ahmad Marzuki from MDC delivering her presentation*

A delegation from the Multimedia Development Corporation (MDC) visited the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI)

on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2003 at its invitation which was to reciprocate a visit made by the students of the Institute in April 2003. On that occasion the Asia –Europe Institutes students were led by the Coordinator of the International Master Degree in Information Management, (IMIM) Professor Antony Bryant from Leeds Metropolitan University, United Kingdom. This first batch of IMIM students found their visit to Cyberjaya to be an informative and memorable one, giving them a better understanding of the country's Multimedia Super Corridor initiative undertaken by the Malaysian Government.

The event on 9<sup>th</sup> September was held at the AEI Auditorium. The Multimedia Development Corporation was represented by Puan Najat Ahmad Marzuki, Senior Manager, Corporate Affairs, Marketing and Creative Multimedia and Dr. Yew Kok Meng, Senior Manager, Higher Education Client Services Division.

Professor Antony Bryant delivered the welcome speech and thanked the delegates of the Multimedia Development Corporation for

accepting the invitation extended by the Asia-Europe Institute.

The presentation commenced with the screening of the

Corporate Video Programme containing an overview of the Multimedia Super Corridor followed by a power point presentation by Puan Najat Ahmad on the structure and development of the Multimedia Super Corridor. Her agenda included Malaysia's phase of growth in the multimedia sector and highlighted the Multimedia Super Corridors' Vision, its compelling factors and the progress and the impact it has had on the society and the economy in Malaysia.

Puan Najat and Dr. Yew responded to some of the queries raised by the students in a lengthy questions and answers session, following the presentation.

The visit by the delegation of the Multimedia Development Corporation was a great opportunity for the

students from various nations including Malaysia, as well as those who attended the presentation to learn more about Malaysia's efforts in becoming a hub of technological innovation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. ■



*Prof. Antony Bryant (front row, left) with Dr. Yew Kok Meng from MDC, and AEI students at the auditorium*



# Economic Integration of East Asia: Towards an East Asian Community - A European Perspective

By KAVITHA THANGAVELU, AEI Research Assistant

On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003, the Asia-Europe Institute (AEI) and the Deutsche Bank jointly organized a lecture on “Economic Integration of East Asia: Towards an East Asian Community-A European Perspective” by Dr. Norbert Walter, Chief Economist at the Deutsche Bank. The lecture was held at the AEI Auditorium at 10am on Monday. The lecture began with a welcome speech by H. E.



*H.E. Mr. Jurgen Staks, Ambassador, Federal Republic of Germany, delivering his welcome speech*

Mr. Jurgen Staks, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany. The lecture was presided by Mr. Kuah Hun Liang, Chief Country Officer, Deutsche Bank, and Tan Sri Dato’ Ajit Singh, Distinguished Research Fellow, AEI and Former Secretary General of ASEAN.

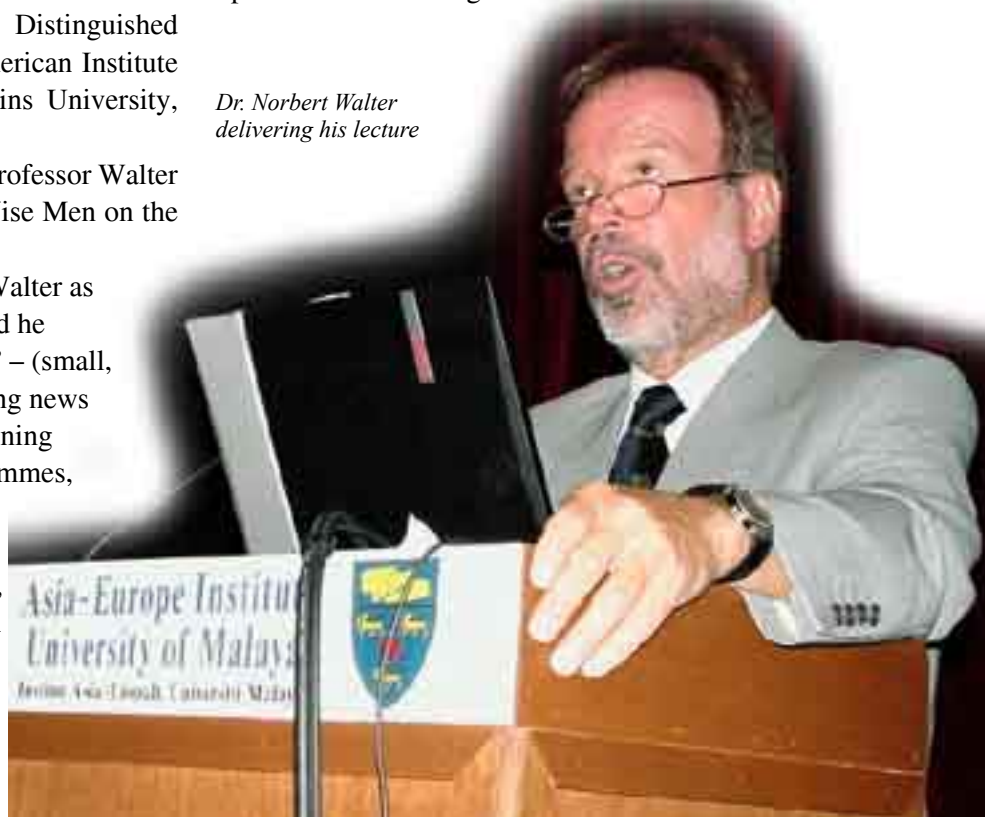
Dr. Norbert Walter was previously Professor and Director of the renowned Kiel Institute for World Economics and was John J. McCloy Distinguished Research Fellow (1986-1987) at the American Institute for Contemporary Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, D. C.

In addition to his current position as Professor Walter is also a member of the Committee of Wise Men on the Regulation of European Securities

Markets (“Lamfalussy Group”). Dr. Walter as the Chief Economist prefers to debate and he expresses himself as a “Cup of Espresso” – (small, dark and strong from watching the evening news bulletins). When it is a question of explaining economic issues, television news, programmes, newspaper and magazine editors look to the 58 year old Frankfurt based for comment and explanation. To this extent, he’s old Europe’s economist, with a keen interest in a global perspective. The lecture was divided into three sections – the first section was about The European Experience which covered main development stages of the European

Union, the European Framework, Challenges ahead: The income gap between the West and the East, and, Similarities and Differences between Europe and Asia. The second part of the lecture was on Economic Co-operation in Asia – in this section he came out with a Framework for East Asia Economic Co-operation, with a focus on AFTA: ASEAN Free Trade Area – Achievements and Future

Plans. Prof. Walter came out with the Facts & Figures regarding Asia Pacific Economic Co-operation (APEC) and he also explained about Evolution of Regional Monetary and Financial Co-operation. The third part of the lecture covered Financial Integration in Asia – where he posed the question “Will East Asia Economic Co-operation lead to Integration?”



*Dr. Norbert Walter delivering his lecture*

While talking about European Economic Integration section Prof. Walter presented the three dimensions of economic integration:

- Integration of the markets for goods, capital and labour.
- Integration of the monetary system of the EU (EMU).
- Integration of the regional, structural and agricultural policies of the EU.

The key challenges brought up by him for the integration are:

- Promoting growth and convergence
- Mitigating adverse effects on income distribution and tensions in the labour markets
- Macroeconomic stabilization and preparation for monetary integration of CEEC
- Financial enlargement

Prof. Walter focused on the framework for financial markets and investment, covers:

- Tax policies
- Take over law
- Labour market
- Agriculture policy

According to him the Similarities between Europe and Asia are:

- Both regions have a long history with firmly anchored national cultures and complex models of society.
- Both are economically not endowed with many natural resources, they are open to foreign trade and investment and therefore have a strong interest in an open international economic and financial system.

He also stated the Differences between Europe and Asia as:

- Economic diversity is more pronounced in Asia ranging from countries with highly modern economies to others with traditional/rural economic structures
- Europe has been a lot more ambitious in integrating since 1945.

On the Evolution of Regional Monetary and Financial Co-operation he explained the Information Exchange and Surveillance Processes, where the ASEAN+3 Surveillance Process - (ASEAN + China, Korea and Japan) was formally initiated in November 1999 with the mandate to periodically conduct peer review of exchange rates, macroeconomic developments and social policies. Also included are information exchange, institutional strengthening and capacity building among members.

- Current standing - on-going process attended twice a year by key policymakers of each member country's Ministry of Finance and Central Banks where information exchange, peer review and regional policy assessment are conducted.

Finally as summing it up he addressed the following issues:

- The ASEAN+3 Surveillance Process and Chiang Mai Initiative mark East Asian policymakers' resolution to develop a regional financial and economic structure based on a "teamwork" approach.
- Harmonisation of exchange rate and monetary policies are also at the forefront of their agenda.
- These efforts are perhaps the most appropriate ones before a common East Asian currency can be pursued since:
  - Structural differences exist
  - Member countries are at different development junctures
  - Political will and popular support are absent
  - Transitional period to a unified currency relatively long as witnessed by Europe's experience. ■



Mr. Kuah Hun Liang (left), with Tan Sri Dato' Ajit Singh

# With a Splash!

## Italian Film in 2003

By RAHAYU KIRANA AHMAT ADAM, AEI Research Assistant

On 20<sup>th</sup> August 2003, AEI screened *Casomai* (If By Chance) for the August Cultural programme, which would make it the first Italian film we've had for the year 2003. His Excellency Analecto Felicani, Ambassador of Italy to Malaysia gave his strong support for this cultural collaboration during one of his visits to the Institute and Mr. Dario Breda, one of the cultural officers at the Embassy, who is also attached to the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics in UM, provided the film for the screening.



*Casomai*, which has a very interesting combination of three genre of film; drama, romance as well as comedy, is one of the nouveau styles of directing and filmmaking.

Produced in 2002 by Alessandro D'Alatri, the film incorporates an element of religion i.e. the church, portrayed unconventionally yet reasonably positive and, for that reason has received numerous international awards and recognition such as the Ecumenical<sup>1</sup> Prize in the 2002 Montreal Film Festival. Some of the other awards received are from the 2002 Fort Lauderdale International Film Festival for the President's Award, the category of Best Drama and Best Foreign Language Film and the Jury Prize award for the category of Best Director (Honourable Mention), Best Actress (Honourable Mention) and, Outstanding Acting Debut Award for Fabio Volo.

This film basically questions the vague parameter but over generalized question on 'how to make a marriage work?'; dealing with the everyday issues, challenges and struggles within this new and conformed life. It raises issues on love, its reality and protagonists. The plot tackles and focuses on external pressures from peers, family, finance and responsibilities of a married couple, based on a "what-if" situation, which is only revealed at the end of the film, giving it a very twisting yet interesting end.

"If the message of the film sounds traditional, D'Alatri tells it using as modern a style as possible, with computer

<sup>1</sup> Ecumenical – adj of or relating to the Christian Church throughout the world, esp. with regard to its unity (Collins Concise Dictionary, 1999 - 4<sup>th</sup> ed)

graphics and slick, commercial-derived imagery to give some sense of the speed and pressure on Stefania and Tomasso's lives. It would be easy to deputize some grim cliché of a soulless, materially-obsessed "modern world" as the villain, but D'Alatri shifts his focus onto their friends and family, most of whom have become so internalized that their message about marriage being temporary and relationships are easily abandoned drive the couple apart instead of helping them when things get tough."

On the evening of the screening, Ms. Alessandra Nonnis, Cultural Attache of the Italian Embassy graced the occasion by giving an introduction and comments on the film. Some of the officers from the Italian Embassy were also present for the screening, giving their support in this cultural collaboration. Promotional materials such as brochures, pamphlets and yers on Italy i.e. places of interest, studying the language as well as educational opportunities were also distributed to the audience, courtesy of the Embassy of Italy to Malaysia.

If you would like to read more on the film (synopsis / reviews etc.), you may surf these websites:

- <http://www.tamtamcinema.it/> (Tam Tam Cinema- Italian Cinema; with an English version)
- <http://us.imdb.com/title/tt0319147/> (Internet Movie Database)
- [http://www.tribute.ca/movie\\_spec/6681.htm](http://www.tribute.ca/movie_spec/6681.htm) (trbute.ca)
- <http://casomai.it> (Official website; Italian)

### Cultural Programmes during the last quarter

#### JULY

- *Cinta dalam sepotong roti* (Love in a slice of bread) – Indonesia
- *Ponette* – France
- *Spinning Gasing* – Malaysia
- *Rain* – New Zealand
- *Mui Du Du Xanh* (Scent of Green Papaya) – Vietnam

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.rickmcginnis.com/movies/ifbychance.htm>

## AUGUST

- **Bend it Like Beckham** – United Kingdom
- **Kandahar** – Iran
- **Casomai** (If By Chance) – Italy
- **Monsoon Wedding** – India

## SEPTEMBER

- **Andrey Rublev** – Russia
- **Xich Lo** (Cyclo) – Vietnam
- **Bella Martha** (Mostly Martha) – Germany
- **Bulan Tertusuk Ilalang** (And the Moon Dances) – Indonesia

# KREIDLER Electronic Music from Germany

## at the Asia-Europe Institute

Jointly Organised by  
GOETHE Institut Inter-Nationes, Kuala Lumpur (<http://www.goethe.de/so/kua/enpmusik.htm>) and the  
Asia-Europe Institute, University of Malaya

Supported by the  
Ministry of Culture, Arts & Tourism Malaysia

1<sup>st</sup> October 2003 (Wednesday)

Admission is Free

TIME: 8.30 pm

VENUE: Auditorium, Asia-Europe Institute  
University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur

Enquiries: Tel. 03 - 2142 2011

E-mail: [gothead@tm.net.my](mailto:gothead@tm.net.my)

Tel. 03 - 7967 6920

E-mail: [kirana\\_adam@hotmail.com](mailto:kirana_adam@hotmail.com)

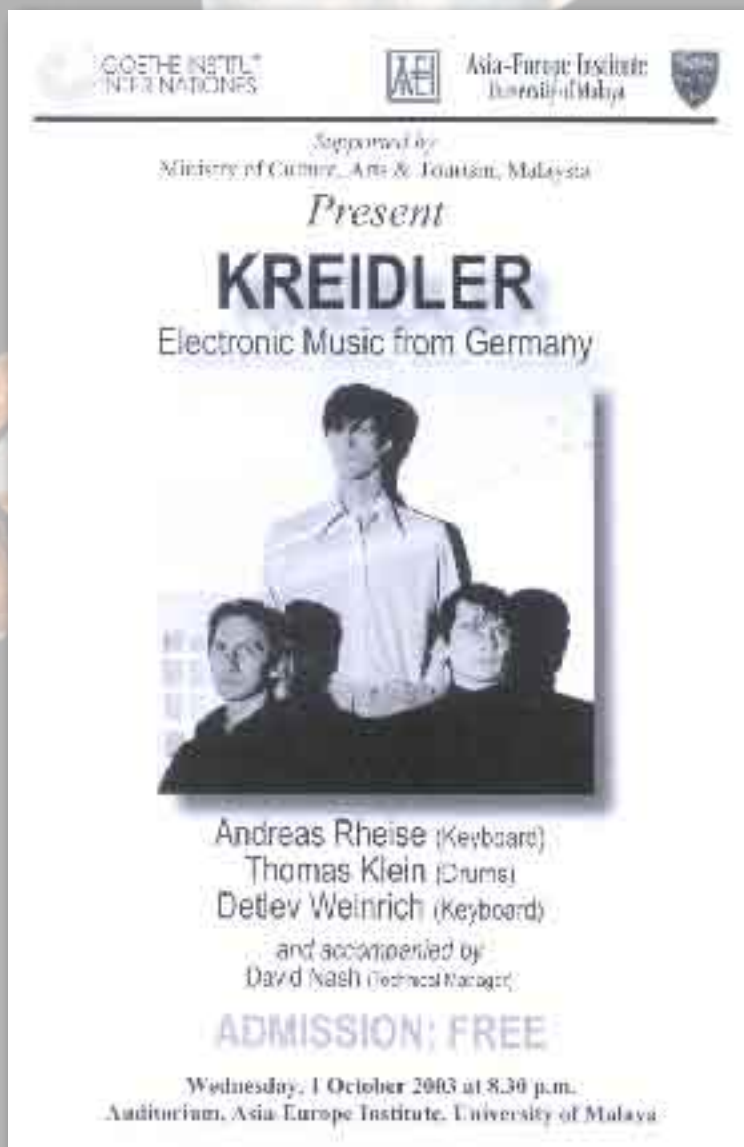
(AEI Cultural Programme)

The Düsseldorf-based electronic trio is  
made up of:

- Andreas Rheise, *Keyboard*
- Thomas Klein, *Drums*
- Detlev Weinrich, *Keyboard*

and accompanied by

David Nash, *Technical Manager*





## Interviews: AEI Alumni Network

By MAMIKO HADA, former AEI Senior Research Assistant  
currently residing in the U.S.

This is the last issue of *AEI News* for the year 2003 and I hope you enjoyed *AEI Alumni Network* interview articles. We have two international alumni for this issue, both of whom represent the mission of AEI - global understanding and enrichment through cultural diversity. Thank you for your readership for this year, and we look forward to seeing you again in the year 2004! If you would like to be included in our *Alumni Network*, please contact Mamiko Hada, *AEI Alumni Network* coordinator at [mhada@vzavenue.net](mailto:mhada@vzavenue.net).



**Veronika Duarte**, née Veronika Kutikova, appeared in our first issue of the *AEI News* this year. Since then, her international journey continued, and now she is temporarily settled in Lisbon, Portugal. She has added yet another language, Portuguese, to her portfolio of “language skills”, and gives us some insight into the cultural comparison between Slovakia, Germany, Portugal and Malaysia. Let’s hear what her cross-continental experiences have been...

**Q: Tell us your background before you joined AEI.**

**Veronika:** I was born in Bratislava, at that time a city in Czechoslovakia. When I was 13, the Communist regime fell which made it possible for us to travel and study abroad. During my graduate studies, I participated in the Exchange Study Program and fulfilled three traineeships, first one at *Robert Bosch GmbH*, where I met my husband, Paulo, second at *Siemens AG*, both in Karlsruhe, Germany and the third one in Kuala Lumpur at *Malaysian-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry*. After finishing my Master’s degree in Bratislava I joined AEI for 18 months.

**Q: What is your prior academic training?**

**Veronika:** I completed my three-year Bachelor’s degree in Management at the Comenius University in Bratislava, the capital of Slovakia. During the last semester I took part in the aforementioned Exchange Study Program at the *Fachhochschule fuer Internationale Wirtschaftsbeziehungen* (University

for International Business Relations) in Eisenstadt, Austria.

After passing the final exams, I immediately started my Master’s degree program in Financial Management at the same university in Slovakia. This is a very common practice in my country, to follow up your Bachelor’s degree immediately with a Master’s, sometimes even without previous work experience. The students who lack previous work experience are expected to acquire that by traineeship during their Master’s studies. However, the majority of the students already have some professional part-time experience as I did at the *Orange – Customer Service Department* and *VZP Insurance Company*, as an accountant.

Because my husband is Portuguese, I also took private Portuguese language classes in Slovakia and I continued at the University of Malaya for two semesters.

**Q: Let’s talk about your experiences at AEI. What projects did you work on?**

**Veronika:** My tasks included coordinating and organizing courses, international conferences and seminars. I was in charge of the *AEI Cultural Showcase* programme, which included screening of Asian and European movies with educational background as well as dance performances organized in collaboration with various Embassies. I also supervised the design and publication of the monthly “*UMESP Newsletter*” and completed a marketing research for the implementation of the International Master Programme in Information Management. I learned a lot from all of these projects but the most valuable experience for me was the opportunity to work with people from different countries, cultures, races and religions. I learned to see things from

various points of views and to better understand others. I wish that everybody, especially politicians would have such a chance.

**Q: So you should have some insights to academic institutions in Malaysia and Europe. Can you explore a little more?**

**Veronika:** Malaysian students respect their professors more than the Europeans generally do, which is a good thing because they are quiet during the classes and don't disturb the class. But on the other hand there is a bigger gap in status between students and teachers in Malaysia. That sometimes makes it difficult to get an active participation.

I think the strengths of AEI are its great future vision, willingness of the staff, good reputation, good contacts, and impeccable facilities. It provides a great opportunity especially for European students to get to know Asian culture and for Asian students to get to know European culture. AEI has already made good progress as an academic institution and I really wish that one day it would become an internationally well-known University.

**Q: What would you say you learned at AEI?**

**Veronika:** I believe my English improved a lot because Giovanni Capannelli, who I worked most closely with, constantly corrected my grammar and style. I am using the organizing skills that I acquired at AEI in my daily life, like preparation of my own wedding. I am an expert in European and Asian movies. I met really good friends at AEI! I gained new perception on life by living in KL. For example, for Europeans in general, a nice skin is a dark skin. So we go to lay in the sun to get suntan. The darker, the better. But it is just an illusion! In Malaysia, I learned that there are people in the world who think the opposite and even use creams to get whiter!

**Q: Now let's move on to your story after you left AEI.**

**Veronika:** I joined AEI in February 2001 and left in August 2002 when my contract expired. I returned to Europe. First stop was Slovakia to see my family and friends. One month later I left for Portugal. I came to Portugal alone as Paulo had to stay in Malaysia for another 4 months, till the end of January 2003. It was very challenging! I moved to his new apartment, which had no electricity, no gas, no fridge, no telephone line, no TV and no furniture except one bed. I got so much headache! Do you know how long it takes to get a telephone line in Portugal? Three

weeks! And do you know how long it takes to get a public transport card? Three months! Luckily I got great support from my Portuguese parents-in-law and made some friends at the University of Lisbon where I took classes in Portuguese language and culture, which made everything easier. I have to say that the Portuguese are very pleasant people who are never in a hurry, always relaxed and always late.

I went home for Christmas and returned to KL in January to pack our furniture. I bought nine cookbooks and spent two hours in TMC trying to buy all spices possible, as I knew how much I was going to miss Asian food.

After Paulo and I moved together to Lisbon, I took some more language classes and started to do my traineeship at *Siemens'* Controlling Department. My tasks there varied from making financial analysis such as MIS-Management Information System or Risk Management to preparing reports based on SAP R/3 such as Closing of the Month or Use of Material.

This summer we got married in Slovakia.

**Q: Let us hear more about your Slovak wedding.**

**Veronika:** The wedding took place in Bratislava in July this year. According to our tradition, the wedding should always take place in the bride's hometown. I am also glad that at least Paulo's friends and family learned a little bit more about Slovakia.

The wedding was very international. We had 100 guests from over 16 countries! From AEI, my colleague, Nazli managed to come.

The wedding ceremony started at 4 pm and was bilingual – Slovak with translation to Portuguese. It was funny when I said “ano” (yes in Slovak) and the interpreter translated “sim” (yes in Portuguese)! As we entered the restaurant, where the wedding took place, the chef dropped a plate on the floor and we had to clean all the mess. This is a Slovak tradition and should bring good luck to our marriage (up until now it has been working!!!). After dinner I danced waltz with my father and Paulo with his mother. This way we opened a disco that followed till midnight. At midnight, I threw my bouquet to single women. Afterwards with a complicated ceremony we changed to national dresses, Paulo in a Portuguese and me in a Slovak. We cut the wedding cake, danced a little bit more until 5 am.

**Q: That sounds really wonderful...what is your next plan?**

**Veronika:** I just finished my traineeship at

*Siemens*. Before our marriage it was difficult for me to find an appropriate job as Portugal is in economic recession and I was a foreigner without working permit or sufficient knowledge of the Portuguese language. Now I am trying to find a job in an international company in finance or marketing.

Yes, we, especially Paulo, would like to stay in Lisbon, but it is possible that we may have to move to Madrid next year. The trend in the Iberian peninsula is to merge the Spanish and Portuguese offices together in order to cut the costs. The company where Paulo works joined the trend. So, we will see.

**Q: You have a lot of international experiences under your belt. Did your perception about certain countries change after you saw it first-hand?**

**Veronika:** I wouldn't say that I changed my perception about any particular country. But I changed my perception on life itself. I see the world with more eyes. Here I will try to describe the countries which I have lived in.

Portugal is a popular tourist destination and many people, especially those from England and Germany, immigrate here. Summer is pleasant - it is hot but the Atlantic wind makes you feel very comfortable. Winter is not that cold (the lowest is 10 degrees Celsius in Lisbon), but many old houses and the university I attended don't have a central heating. I never felt so cold in my entire life as when I came to Portugal! The nicest thing about Portugal is the people. Actually I found many similarities between the Portuguese and Malaysians! They even say "lah"! For example "Desculpa lah!" (Excuse me)!

Germany is an excellent place to work in. Everything is well organized and the working conditions are the best I have ever seen (35 working hours a week, 30 days paid vacation, etc, etc...)

The character of Slovaks is something between Portuguese and Germans. People in Slovakia are very nice but not as nice and relaxed as Portuguese and are quiet organized and systematic but not as well as Germans.



*The bridegroom and bride in their traditional Portuguese and Slovak costumes*

The funny thing is that I adapted faster to Malaysia than to Portugal. In Malaysia I experienced a "positive discrimination" and people in Malaysia gave me a lot of respect and credit. In contrast, in Portugal I am seen as a person from Eastern Europe, which equals, in some people's eyes, to cheap labor. This is a result of many immigrants who came to Portugal from Ukraine and Moldova (the country south from Ukraine). A number of the older Portuguese hardly know where Slovakia is situated.

**Q: Do you have any message to AEI students and friends?**

**Veronika:** Enjoy all the time you are there! Enjoy *nasi ayam*, *nasi goreng*, *terima kasih*, *sama sama*, *matsalleh*, hot weather, ok

lah, no problem lah, ... You will miss everything once you leave!

**Hakim Elabr** is a native of Belgium, having spent some time in Morocco, the United States and Malaysia. He is finishing his undergraduate education in Liege, one of the biggest cities in Belgium. He is sharing with us his insight into how he came to Kuala Lumpur and AEI.

**Q: Please tell us your short history before joining AEI.**

**Hakim:** I was born in Belgium in 1981. I grew up in a city situated in the South East of Belgium, Liege. It's the third biggest city in the country. Belgium is a small country so you often get to cross the borders, to Germany, to the Netherlands, or to France. I always liked traveling and discovering new cultures.

I was born in Liege but my family is originally from Morocco, North Africa---that's where my parents were born. I still have plenty of family members over there and I do visit them as often as I can. My internship at AEI was not my first international experience. I studied in the US for a semester as an exchange student previously. That first experience convinced me to look for an internship abroad.

How did I come to find AEI? I heard a lot about Malaysia; many people were telling me that the country was worth seeing, and they were right. So I began to look for companies there as a place to do my internship. Then I got in contact with the Belgian Embassy, specifically with Mr Mannigard and he told me about the Institute and there I was in September 2002, entering the nice building of AEI.

**Q: Tell us what you are studying and your future plans.**

**Hakim:** I am studying at HEC Liege, a very reputable business school among French-speaking countries. I am now entering my fifth and last year in order to become a commercial engineer. I really like my studies because they give me the opportunity to discover many cultures.

About my future career--- it's high time for me to think of what I'm going to be. I am really looking forward to finishing school in order to be able to begin my professional career.

**Q: Can you tell us what you did during your tenure at AEI?**

**Hakim:** I joined the AEI team as a Junior Research Assistant in September 2002 and left two months later. In my University program, we must do a two-month internship at the beginning of the fourth year and then continue school.

I still remember the day when I arrived in KL. I was not alone---two of my friends were also hired as interns at AEI for the same period. They were Kamal Ikherrazen and Anisse Moujahid. The day we landed in KL, it was raining as usual. We only had the address of the Institute so that's where we started. There we were really welcomed by the staff. And we quickly felt as members of the AEI team.

The main project I was involved in was the project on ASEAN Free Trade Area. I worked with the former Secretary General of ASEAN, Tan Sri Ajit Singh. I would have liked to spend more time working on that project, because here in Europe we don't hear much about ASEAN. So it was a real enrichment to study the strengths of the South-east Asian Nations. I got to study the feasibility of ASEAN + South Korea Free Trade Area.

I also worked on several other tasks as updating databases, writing letters, and attending conferences. Another interesting project I worked on was the Movie Show. It was fun to be alone in the theater, and I felt like a filmmaker editing his own movie...

**Q: Now that you have seen several academic institutions outside Europe, how would you describe AEI compared to others you have seen so far?**

**Hakim:** I have been studying mostly in Belgium, so I will describe what I think are the differences between AEI and my school in Belgium. I think the main difference is the interaction between students and teachers; in my school we don't get to spend much time with our teacher, but at AEI, the teachers were really close to the students. As an academic institution, I think that AEI is really performing well and that they do their best in order to help the students so that they are able to totally devote themselves in their studies. The main strengths of AEI seem to be the international atmosphere, the diversity of cultures, and the experienced teachers that they have.

**Q: Let's talk about Belgium in your view.**

**Hakim:** Belgium is a small kingdom in the center of the European Union. It's divided into three parts, the French-speaking, the Dutch-speaking and the German-speaking. The capital is Brussels (it's also the capital of the European Union), and ten million people live here. The main cities in the country are Brussels, Antwerp, Liege, Brugge, and Namur.

Belgium is a really nice country to live in, I like it a lot. I don't know if I'll be living here for my entire life, but I have many friends and family here.

**Q: Any message to current AEI students?**

**Hakim:** I met many great people at AEI from all over the world. I hope to see you again soon whenever that may be! ■





# Malaysia - Peaceful Land

By MA TIN CHO MAR @ NOORJAHAN BI BI, AEI Senior Research Assistant

I come from Myanmar. My country is lush, rich in natural resources and home to dozens of races and cultures. Myanmar is a land endowed with much natural beauty, from the snow-capped mountains of the north to the vast and beautiful coastal regions. She is also a land of many races (about 135 ethnic groups) whose ethnic cultures and traditions from colourful costumes to lively dances, music and songs are attractive components for tourism development. In promoting rapid development of the tourism industry we are trying our best not to spoil the natural environment. Myanmar is blessed with about half its land area covered by forests, rich in providing cover to rare species of animals and birds. Thus, Myanmar is ready to welcome more and more visitors each year with the development of the tourism industry. I would like to invite all of you to visit Myanmar to see the peoples' innocence and natural beauty of the country.

Presently I am in the Asia-Europe Institute(AEI) of the University of Malaya in Kuala Lumpur. I joined AEI in May 2003 as a senior research assistant. I have also applied to do my Ph.D here in AEI and am waiting for the offer. My first degree is in Economics from the Institute of Economics, Yangon, Myanmar. I obtained a master's degree in Business Administration from Universiti Putra Malaysia. I am very much motivated by AEI. I am able to feel the complexity of studying regional integration and the benefits of working with different cultures and people from different backgrounds. I would also like to say that I will always be grateful to Professor Dato' Dr. Shaharil Talib and Associate Professor Dr. Shamsulbahiah Ku Ahmad for giving me this valued learning and working opportunity and it is up to me to create my chances and to chart a brighter future. AEI is giving me this new milestone in my life to pursue my doctoral research here in Malaysia in a multicultural learning environment.

I cannot help feeling a little envious of Malaysians because Malaysia is a beautiful country. The Malays, Chinese, Indians and the indigenous peoples of Sabah and Sarawak have their own cultures and unique features that impress visitors. Tropical forests, seas with crystal clear water and beautiful beaches are found everywhere. There are many nice places to visit in Malaysia such as Langkawi Islands, Tioman Island, Taman Negara where nature is at its best, Sipadan Island where the beautiful corals grow, Sibu Island, Rawa Island, Taman Pertanian and many more.

About 70% of Malaysia is still green. Malaysians care about their environment and nature. Flora and fauna flourish well in the Malaysian environment. In the present moment, Malaysians have greater awareness about pollution and the quality of the environment in order to ensure that they preserve their natural surroundings.

Malaysia's flora and fauna can be seen and appreciated in a number of places. Taman Negara is the national park, Endau Rompin is a beautiful tropical rain forest. Sepilok Sabah rain forest is famous for its Orang Utan. Sarawak too is a tropical rain forest state. Cameron Highlands is famous for flowers, fruits, vegetable and tea. Rantau Abang is where turtles lay their eggs. Sibu Island, Rawa Island, Tioman Island and Langkawi Islands are beautiful. Special care is taken to ensure that the corals around them are not destroyed.

I find Malaysian culture unique and fantastic. Even though the country is going through rapid development, the people are preserving their respective cultures in order that the younger generations do not forget their heritage.

The cultural dances such as joget, kuda kepang, Bazau, martial arts such as silat, music with kompong, religious gatherings for doa selamat are alive and practised. The communities cherish their cultural heritage and are proud of it.

Kuala Lumpur is a developed city. It is modern and prosperous yet retains a colourful blend of Malay, Chinese, Indian, Arab and European cultural influences and the people are very nice. It is a progressive city. I like the country, the beautiful landscape and the people who are very helpful and tolerant. As a Muslim, I am very happy to be in Malaysia. Since coming here I am able to practise my faith with confidence. I am proud of my faith. I am impressed with Malaysia's political system and its government and the manner in which the peoples of various ethnic and religious origins live together in peace and harmony.

Moreover, I feel great whenever I see the beautiful mosques in Malaysia. Among the different features that give Islamic architecture its brilliance, Southeast Asian culture has been one such essential ingredient adding much flavour to the exquisiteness of this heritage. Southeast Asian Muslims constitute almost a quarter of the world's Muslim population thereby being one of the strong pillars in the thriving structure

of the ummah. Many of the traditional mosques have wooden floors. They stand on raised platforms with wooden steps leading up to the main prayer hall. The Masjid Kampung Laut, built in the seventeenth century is the oldest surviving mosque in Malaysia and stands out as a typical example of this type of mosque architecture. It is situated in a small town called Nilam Puri, 10 km south of Kota Bharu, the state capital of Kelantan. One of my friends told me that this unique and historic mosque was originally located at Kampung Laut on the banks of the Kelantan river opposite Kota Bharu. However, because of the danger of floods, the mosque was dismantled and re-built on its present location. The mosque is made entirely of cenggal wood and without the use of nails.

Especially during *Ramadan* (fasting month), I feel happy when I see people going to the mosques to break their fast and to pray.

I think the most interesting characteristic of Malaysia

is the way different races and cultures live together. Another astonishment is the technical development of the country. I am also hoping very much to learn more about the different cultures and the exchange of ideas, knowledge and experience at AEI. I also believe that I shall be able to gather the information that I need for my research here in AEI.

Finally, I would like to say that I am very happy working in AEI which is a vessel of knowledge working towards fostering mutual cultural understanding amongst people. I am also enthusiastic about doing my research on the topic

“Study on trade liberalization and regional integration within ASEAN countries” under the supervision of Associate Professor Dr. Shamsulbahriah Ku Ahmad. I believe that I shall benefit from the training here and I am looking forward to the challenging tasks ahead here in AEI. My thanks to everyone. ■

## Interviews

By MANIQUE A.E. COORAY, AEI Senior Research Assistant

**AEI interviewed two of the Master Degree Programme students for the academic year 2003-2004. Here are some of the thoughts they shared.**



**Ramon Pedrosa Lopez** from Spain is following the International Master Degree in Regional Integration in the Session 2003/2004.

**Q: You were one of the first few to arrive at AEI for this academic session. Could you please tell us briefly about yourself?**

**Ramon:** I come from Europe and I am a graduate student in Spain. I was born in Valencia, a seaside city beside the Mediterranean, and I live in Madrid. I hold a BA in Information Science, and I am working for a Ph.D in International Relations in the Political Science department of the Universidad de Madrid.

**Q: Have you been to Malaysia before? What are your impressions of the country?**

**Ramon:** No I have not. In fact this is my first trip to Asia and it has been a beautiful experience. It has been a real cultural shock to me. Travelling is the best way to eliminate prejudices and to open one's mind and for me the opportunity was here at the right time in the right moment. I immediately fell in love with Malaysia and with Kuala Lumpur. I was impressed by the capacity for work of the people and the beauty of Malaysia's landscape. I will never forget the first time I saw the Petronas Towers. It is an amazing country!

**Q: What was your view on living in Malaysia prior to your arrival and how has that changed since you arrived?**

**Ramon:** I knew there was going to be a time that would change me. As Professor Rodrigo told me once in Spain, “this experience will change you forever.” In fact, everything has been different. I imagined many things before coming, but most of them have been completely different. Asia is a continent that must be lived. Getting to know it through books and films ends up in a non-exact vision. Every day is a new day with new things to learn. Finally, I learnt how to use chopsticks!

**Q: What made you choose AEI to pursue your Master's degree?**

**Ramon:** In Europe I was starting my research on regional integration process, which is one of my main interests. Professor Rodrigo informed me about this Master's programme, I decided to be here, because it offered me the opportunity of going through a lot of topics that would help me develop further investigation.

**Q: What is your view of AEI and the University of Malaya?**

**Ramon:** I am aware that the University of Malaya is the oldest and most prestigious in the country. It

seems to be a very interesting place, where students from different races, origins and backgrounds meet to develop their own conclusions of things. With regards to AEI, I think that the idea of bringing together students from Asia and Europe is not only beautiful but very effective. I hope it will serve as an embryo of a new community of understanding between our two continents.

**Q: What is in your opinion is the distinguishing feature of the International Master degree programmes in the way that they are taught, structured etc, as compared with your previous academic programmes.**

**Ramon:** It seems to me a very dynamic and innovative programme. The way it is structured will allow us to know well-known scholars and many interesting topics. I am sure that by the end of the year I would have developed a good grasp over this academic field. In the past I had never been lectured by so many important scholars from all over the world....

**Q: What are your future plans? And how does the course of study that you are doing benefit your career plans?**

**Ramon:** My plan is to finish my PhD in International Relations. I hope that my time in Malaysia will open new doors to me in different continents. I would like to pursue further research on the regional relations between Southeast Asia and Latin America, but more of this later. Of course, it will help in my career path, it will open my eyes and widen my views and knowledge on International Relations and Regional Integration.

**Q: As a new student could you tell me your first impressions of AEI- in just one sentence?**

**Ramon:** AEI is one of the most impressive academic environment I have ever seen.



Vu Manh Hung is from Vietnam following the International Master Degree in Regional Integration in the academic year 2003/2004.

**Q: You were one of the first few students to arrive at AEI for this academic session. Could you please tell us briefly about yourself.**

**Vu Manh Hung:** First I wish to thank the

Institute for providing me the chance to study here. I graduated with a Bachelor of Laws degree from the Hanoi Law University, a well known University in Vietnam. After graduation I worked for a well-known Vietnamese Law firm in Vietnam, as a Consultant, providing legal assistance mostly in Vietnamese law, to foreign investors in Vietnam.

**Q: Have you been to Malaysia before? What is your first impression of the country and Kuala Lumpur?**

**Vu Manh Hung:** No I have not. This is the first time that I have left home. My impression of Malaysia is that it was a very, very beautiful country, where everything is in order. I have visited a few places, KLCC and some other parts of Kuala Lumpur. The development in the city, I think, is very good, and the means of transportation is also good. It helps me to go more around easily.

**Q: What was your view on living in Malaysia prior to your arrival and how has that changed since your arrival?**

**Vu Manh Hung:** Before I came here my view of Malaysia was that it is one of the ASEAN countries. And I also knew that Malaysia has three major races, and three languages. I can speak English with the locals and it is very easy for me. And the economy of Malaysia is different from that of Vietnam. When I arrived here everything was different from my original views. I couldn't believe how developed it was. But now I can see the difference.

**Q: What made you choose AEI to pursue your Master's degree?**

**Vu Manh Hung:** Because as human beings we have ambitions in our lives and I would like to gain some position status in society. A Bachelor degree is not enough for me. I would like to do a Master or PhD for my future. Because that is the only way to gain social status in society, by studying more and more. I have to study throughout my whole life, that is a tendency that I have. And with a background in Economics I can do anything. That is why I chose to do a Master degree so that I may have a greater chance of success by enrolling in the International programmes such as the programmes offered by the Asia- Europe Institute.

**Q: What is your view of AEI and University of Malaya?**

**Vu Manh Hung:** Vietnam is not so developed for students. There is a lack everything from textbooks and other things that they need to study . Therefore I find this to be a very good Institute. Everything that the students need for studying is available and it is easier to study here.

**Q: What in your view is the distinguishing feature of the International Masters degree programme in the way that it is taught and structures etc as compared with your previous academic programmes?**

**Vu Manh Hung:** In the few weeks I have studied so far, I think the distinguishing feature is that in Vietnam everything is taught by textbooks but here we have very up to date textbooks, computers and they are very relevant to learning.

**Q: What are your future plans, and how will the course of study that you are doing benefit your career path?**

**Vu Manh Hung:** After graduating, if I can, I will study more and more. I will then apply for the PhD programme and if I cannot enrol for the PhD then I will continue to work for the Consultancy Firm in Vietnam because then I can help my country and serve my people. As you know Vietnam joined ASEAN and AFTA. So it is very difficult for Vietnamese people to compete with the developed nations like Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand. So I hope I can bring my knowledge to help the people in Vietnam.

**Q: As a new student could you tell me your first impressions of AEI in just one sentence.**

**Vu Manh Hung:** I can only say it is an excellent institute. ■



## Visit by **Professor Om Prakash**

Professor Om Prakash, Professor of Economics at the University of Delhi, is a well-known authority in the field of the Economic History of India. He had his education, at the University of Delhi, obtained his Master of Arts (M.A) in Economics and received his Doctorate of Philosophy in Economic History (1967) from University of Delhi. He was the Director of the Delhi School of Economics from 2001-02 and held several prestigious positions as a scholar and as an academician. Over the last 35 years or so Professor Om Prakash chaired several International conferences and has presented more than 100 research seminars in various universities at home and in Australia, Europe, and Japan. The latest paper presented by him was “The Bay of Bengal in Asian Maritime and Cultural Network, 1500-1800”. A forthcoming publication of his is “Bullion for Goods: European and Indian Merchants in the Indian Ocean Trade, 1500-1800”.

Professor Om Prakash’s visit to the Asia Europe Institute was regarding the creation of the historical Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 1900-1939. He was briefed on the compilation of data on external trade. A preliminary database to assist in the construction of the aggregate demand components of the GDP has been created with trade data (imports & exports). Asia–Europe Institute is home to the only project of this kind

in Malaysia that seeks to constitute a historical statistical database for national accounting in Peninsular Malaya, from 1900 to 1939. The present and the future are best understood through the prism of the past.

Professor Om Prakash was impressed with the documentation and techniques used in the compilation of trade data at the Asia- Europe Institute. A commentary on the external trade data for each of the administrative units was written for the use of readers. He suggested that more detailed investigations at the level of commodity composition need to be done at the administrative unit level as well as national level to analyze trade data in a comprehensive manner. ■

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