

PULSE

E-Bulletin of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



Students and lecturers celebrate after the successful performance

English Department Theatre Production 2019

By Associate Professor Dr. Mary Susan

Students of the Theatre Performance class, run by the English Department, staged their annual performance on 24 May 2019, playing to a sold-out crowd. They staged three short plays (Neighbours, Lifeboat and Malam Konsert), and screened two short films (The Sound of Silence and Trance). The script for Neighbours was written by English Department students Nurbahiyyah Syazwani Binti Zainurin and Muhammad Shazreen Afiq bin Azhar. The two short films were also based on original ideas from the students.

Lifeboat was adapted by the students from a short film by Lorraine Nicholson, while Malam Konsert was written by Jit Murad. This annual production also celebrates close cooperation between the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, as the Theatre Performance class from Arts works together with the English and Performing Arts class from Linguistics to stage exciting, original plays. The course challenges the students to be disciplined, creative team players, and helps them to learn new skills not commonly found in the syllabus.

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STAY IN TOUCH

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Professor Vethamani with Dr Susan Philip

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Dato' Dr. M. Shanmughalingam

Readings by Professor Malachi Edwin Vethamani and by Dato' Dr M. Shanmughalingam

By Associate Professor Dr. Mary Susan

n 10th April, the English Department was visited by Dato' Dr M. Shanmughalingam, whose short stories and poems have been published in over 30 international and national anthologies in France, India, Ireland, Malaysia, Singapore, the UK and the US. He regaled the audience with lively readings of excerpts from his first collection of short stories, Marriage and Mutton Curry.

The English Department was also pleased to host renowned poet, short story writer and academic Professor Malachi Edwin Vethamani on 23rd May for a reading and Q&A session based on his creative work. For Professor Vethamani, who is currently with the University of Nottingham Malaysia, the event was a homecoming of sorts, as he is also a proud alumnus of the English Department. The ses-

sion began with readings from his work by various members of the Department, including Dr Sharifah Osman, Dr Susan Philip and Dr Leonard Jeyam. Others who offered readings were Professor Stefanie Pillai of the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics at UM, and Mr Wilson Henry, a postgraduate student at the University of Nottingham Malaysia. Dr Teoh Hooi See of the Chinese Studies Department read a Mandarin translation of one of the poems. Professor Vethamani then took to the mic to read a selection of his work, to offer reflections on the writing process, and to take questions from the audience. The event concluded with the sale of Professor Vethamani's books, followed by photograph and autograph sessions.

Studies through a Southeast Asian Lens

By Associate Professor Dr. Md Nasrudin

Center for Japanese Studies, University of Hawaii at Manoa from 22-26 May 2019 to attend a workshop entitled Japan/ Japanese Studies Through a Southeast Asian Lens, which was then followed with a meeting on research and publication. This workshop was fully sponsored by The Japan Foundation under the project Incorporating Southeast Asian Perspectives in Japanese Studies. Dr Md Nasrudin who is a lecturer at the Department of East Asian Studies, also presented his research paper, "Facing Challenges: The Current State of Japanese Studies in Malaysia." This workshop was also attended by participants from National University of Singapore, Nanyang Technological University, University of Indonesia, Thammasat University, Ateneo de Manila University, and University of Hawaii.



Dr Nasrudin and Professor Barbara Andaya of Hawaii University

Prominent Scholars visiting IR Dept. By Dr Roy Anthony Rogers



Strategic Studies was recently visited by several prominent scholars. In March, the Department hosted Associate Professor Dr. Bilveer Singh (Department of Political Science, National University of Singapore) and his team: Jasminder Singh (Senior Analyst, International Centre for Political Violence & Terrorism Research), S Rajaratnam (School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University), and Muhammad Haziq Bin Jani (Research Analyst, Rajaratnam School of International Studies). They presented a public lecture, 'Terrorism in Southeast Asia: Trends and Challenges' focusing on the radicalisation

by Daesh. The event was jointly organised by Asia Europe Institute (AEI), Center for ASEAN Regionalism (CARUM) and the Department of International and Strategic Studies. There were roughly 700 participants at this public lecture, comprising students, and representatives from government agencies and non-governmental organisations.

In May, Emeritus Professor Dr. Hieyeon Keum (Department of International Relations, University of Seoul, South Korea) met up with students and discussed diplomatic relations between the Koreas and the United States, especially in view of the North-Korea-United States Summit in Singapore (2018) and in Vietnam (2019). In addition, Emeritus Professor Keum also delivered a lecture on the China-Korea relations.



Community Engagement Day 2019

By Noor Syahriza

n 24th May 2019, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences held its Community Engagement Day during which teams from each department presented their experiences. Their presentations were evaluated by a panel of judges comprising Ms Vigneshree King, Mr Hashim Ghany, and Mr Mohd Shaiful Rizal.

The Department of Geography was the winner this year, whereas the Department of Administration and Social Justice, and the Department of Media and Communication Studies were placed second and third, respectively.





This year, teams were also provided with a capital to initiate small businesses to fund their activities. The Department of Administration and Social Justice generated the highest income and received an additional RM300 courtesy of a generous sponsor, Mdm Napisah Abd. Rahman.

AP Dr Zulkanain (right) receives a token of appreciation from Prof. Dr Tshering



AP Dr Zulkanain (middle) with the Bhutan delegates and academic staff of History Department

Visit from the Kingdom of Bhutan

By AP Dr Zulkanain Abdul Rahman

n 10th May 2019, the Department of History received a delegation from the Royal University of Bhutan, which was led by Professor Dr. Tshering Wangdi, President of Sherubtse College, Royal University of Bhutan. Their visit was welcomed by Associate Professor Dr Zulkanain Abdul Rahman, Head of History Department and other department academic staff.

The delegates were interested in establishing collaborations between the two departments. They also welcomed input from academic staff pertaining to



the framework of the postgraduate studies curriculum offered by Yonpula Centenary College.

Additionally, the delegation from the Royal Bhutan University paid a visit to the Dean. It was agreed that our faculty will receive exchange students from Royal Bhutan, with the further possibility of staff exchange in the future.

Translation as an Ethical Project by Prof. Sharmani

By Prof. Sharmani Gabriel

rofessor Sharmani Patricia Gabriel of the Department of English delivered the Plenary Lecture at the Fifth International Conference on Linguistics, Literature and Culture convened by

Universiti Sains Malaysia at the Wembley Hotel, George Town, Penang on 29 & 30 July 2019. Her lecture was titled "Change or Preservation?: Translation as an Ethical Project". The main objective of the conference was to serve as a platform for scholars and researchers to share their ideas on emerging issues in literature, language and culture in Asia and to form alliances with one another to work towards developing new knowledges that will contribute to these fields of study and benefit society.





Guest Lecture at Universitas Negeri Malang

By Dr Mashitah Hamidi

n 17th July 2019, Dr. Mashitah Hamidi from the Department of Social Administration and Justice was invited as guest lecturer on the topic of Gender Equality: Strengthening the Support System for Migrant Workers Families in Indonesia, at the Universitas Negeri Malang, Indonesia. The program, a collabora-

tion between Universitas Surabaya and STIE Malangkucecwara, was fully funded by the Indonesian Ministry of Research, Technology and Higher Education. The program lasted two weeks, during which exchange students from other countries such as China, Thailand, Philippines and also Indonesia were exposed to migration issues in Indonesia before having the opportunity to live with their adoptive families who were migrant workers. Dr. Mashitah delivered a lecture entitled "Emotionally attached or detached? The life story of repeat migrant women and their families".





Social Work & Academic Publications

By Dr Mashitah Hamidi

n 5th and 6th August 2019, Department of Social Administration and Justice hosted Professor Dr. M. Rezaul Islam, Professor in Social Work at the Institute of Social Welfare & Research, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Professor Dr. Rezaul also served as International Academic Adviser at the Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences prior to his role as Visiting Professor in the Department of Social Administration and Justice from 2012 to 2016. A 2-day seminar was held at DKC and Dataran Sastera featuring talks on writing effective literature reviews and writing journal articles, in order to encouraged ISI-based publications among postgraduate students and academic staff.





he 7th Japan-ASEAN University of Malaya-Kwansei Gakuin University (UM-KGU) Project was held from the 1st to 7th of August 2019. It involved academic staff and students from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the School of International Studies (SIS), KGU. The Dean of SIS, KGU, Professor Hirabayashi Takahiro and Professor Atsumi Hiroyuki were the main organisers of the project. University of Malaya was represented by

KGU-UM ASEAN Project 2019

By Dr Roy Anthony Rogers

Dr. Mala Rajo Sathian from the Department of Southeast Asia Studies and Dr. Roy Anthony Rogers from the Depart-

ment of International and Strategic Studies, and 11 undergraduates from our faculty.

The theme of the project was socio-political cooperation between Japan and ASEAN. Dr. Roy Anthony Rogers presented on "Japan-ASEAN Cooperation in Countering Non-Traditional Security Issues" while Dr. Mala Rajo Sathnian spoke on "Multiculturalism, ASEAN and Southeast Asia". Besides participating in lectures and forums, students had a field trip to Daikin Industries/Technology Innovation Center. In addition, students and lecturers also visited the ancient city of Nara, which is well known for the Todai-ji temple, a UNES-CO World Heritage Site.

Participants of the project forged friendships and learnt from each other's culture and traditions. Additionally, Japanese students from KGU learnt about the political and social dynamics of Southeast Asia. A farewell party was held on the last day during which Dr. Mala Rajo Sathian thanked the host SIS, KGU and Dr. Roy Anthony Rogers summarised the events of the past seven days by combining the acronyms of the two institutions KGUUM: K-kokoro kara (sincerity), G-gembira (happiness/ joy among participants), U- unity (bond between the two universities), U- understanding (among the participants although coming from very different backgrounds), M-memories (the positive experiences during the project).



n 4th of July 2019, Associate Professor Dr. Martin O'Brien from Faculty of Business, University of Wollongong, Australia delivered a Public Lecture entitled "Labour Regulation Reforms and Employment Outcomes: A Case Study of Public Holiday Penalty Rate Reductions in Australia" at Dataran Sastera, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. The

Public Lecture by Dr Martin O'Brien

Dr Thirukaunarasu

public lecture was jointly organized by Department of Southeast Asian Studies and Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, and was the result of a Memorandum of Understanding signed in June 2018 between University of Malaya and University of Wollongong.

The lecture also coincided with the visit of 20 students from Faculty of Business, University of Wollongong to University of Malaya. These students were accompanied by Dr. Martin O'Brien as part of the study tour to Malaysia and Singapore for students enrolled in COMM335 course offered by the Faculty of Business, University of Wollongong, Australia.

World Literatures and the Global South Conference

By Prof. Dr. Sharmani Patricia

harmani Patricia Gabriel of the Department of English participated as an invited speaker at the third international congress of the World Literature Association's "World Literatures and the Global South" conference hosted by the University of Sydney, Australia from 23-25 August 2019. The concepts of world literature(s) and the Global South are two widely discussed notions that are continuously being debated and redefined, and the conference offered an ideal platform to explore and interrogate these two unsettled terms. The conference's keynote speakers were Professor Gauri Viswanathan from Columbia University (in picture) and writer Alexis Wright. The conference was convened by the University of Sydney's School of Languages and Cultures and Peking University's Australian Studies Centre.





UM Delegation to Summer School Programme at Gajah Mada University

our Master programme students from the History
Department took part in the History Summer School
organised by the History Department of Gajah Mada
University, Yogjakarta, Indonesia, from 22nd July to 2nd
August 2019. These students were Muhammad Syafiq
Jamaluddin, Izran Al Amin, Lee Jen Wee and Zulnazry
Zaini. The Dean, Prof. Danny Wong was the first speaker
for the Summer School. His lecture was entitled, "Chinese
in Southeast Asia in a Transnational Context".



L to R: Izran, Jen Wee, Syafiq, Prof. Wong and Zulnazry arriving at Yogjakarta

GIS Training Programme for Orang Asli Community

he Geography Department conducted the first of a series of training courses for the Orang Asli community in the technique of using Geography Information System and Global Positioning System. The purpose was to allow the Orang Asli to gather scientific evidence as part of their efforts to preserve their customary lands. The first batch of 11 students received certificates of completion from the Vice Chancellor, Datuk IR (Dr) Abd Rahim Hashim at the end of their training. The course was conducted by the Head of the Department of Geography, Associate Professor Dr Aziz

Shafie, and his team. During the course of the training, the trainees stayed on campus and found the experience enriching.



The VC, Datuk Rahim Hashim presenting certificate to one of the course participants.

Visit of Peking UniversityAlumni Association

he President of the Peking University
Alumni Association of Malaysia (PKUAAM)
Mr. Nai Chen Huang, paid a visit to the
Dean to explore possibilities of working together. The visit was held in conjunction with the visit of Professor Wu Xiaoan of Department of History, Peking University and Head of Centre of

Overseas Chinese Studies, Peking University who was attached to the Faculty for two months.



Keynote at World Hakka Federation Academic Conference

he Dean, Prof.
Danny Wong, was
invited to deliver
a keynote lecture at the
World Hakka Federation Academic Conference on 20th July 2019.
The conference, organised in advance of
the 30th World Hakka
Federation Convention,



explored the theme of "The World Hakka: Sustainable and Prosperous". The Dean's lecture was entitled "Another Type of Hakka: the Hakka Christians of Malaysia".

Nottingham Trent University

delegation from Nottingham Trent University paid a visit to the Dean on 6th September 2019. The visit was a follow-up of an earlier visit by representatives of the same university on 24th June. They discussed the possibilities of student exchange and a joint-MA programme in International and Defence Studies. Also present at the meeting was Dr Roy Anthony Rogers, the Head of Department for International and Strategic Studies Department.



Lloyd Fernando Seminar Series at the English Dept

n 24th September, the Lloyd Fernando Seminar Series featured Beth Yahp, an award-winning author, editor and creative-writing teacher of adults and children who has published short fiction and travel and memoir feature articles in Australia, South-East Asia and Europe. Yahp currently teaches creative writing at the University of Sydney. Yahp gave a stimulating talk about her experiences writing "Eat First, Talk Later: a fictional memoir".

On 17th October, the department was visited by Alex Tan Bok Hooi, whose Malay short stories have been published in Dewan Siswa and anthologised in multiple volumes. Tan also writes English fiction, and his books have been listed among the 50 Best Malaysian Titles for International Rights 2016/17 and 2018/19.

Speaking to staff and students of the department, Tan discussed his journey as a writer in both English and Malay.







Talk on The Art of Being Malaysian

r Susan Philip was invited to give a talk at the School of English, University of Nottingham Malaysia, on October 16, as part of their Research Talks series. Her talk was entitled "The Art of Being Malaysian: Bodies and Voices in Selected Malaysian Plays." She was also invited to be a panelist on Dato M Shanmughalingam's book Marriage and Mutton Curry, on 20 October, at Lit Books in Petaling Jaya.

KL-Shanghai International Conference on Sustainable Urbanization and Urban Culture

n 23rd to 24th July 2019, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and the Center for Urban Culture, Shanghai Normal University, China, co-organised an international conference on Urbanization and Urban Culture of Kuala Lumpur and Shanghai. The Conference was officiated by the Deputy Minister for Federal Territory, Dr. Shahruddin Mohd. Salleh, and was attended by more than 150 people. A total of 22 papers were presented by re-



searchers from both sides, which generated insightful discussions and debates on the notion of urbanisation. In his keynote paper, Professor Su Zhiliang, Director of the Center for Urbanization and Urban Culture, focused on how Shanghai had developed from a sleepy fishing village to a major cosmopolitan city, which will eventually become a mega-city.

International Conference on Cohesive Society

Prof. Danny Wong, the Dean of the faculty, was part of a delegation of Universiti Malaya faculty members who participated in the International Conference on Cohesive Societies organised by the Nanyang Technological University at Raffles City, Singapore, from 19th to 21st June 2019. The UM delegation was led by Professor Abdul Aziz Abdul Rahman, the Deputy Vice Chancellor for Students and Alumni Affairs. Among the notable speakers at the conference was Karen Amstrong, etc. The Dean also met up with Professor Wang Gungwu, one of our faculty's former deans.



Prof. Danny Wong with Prof. Wang Gungwu and Prof. Hoon Changyau of Universiti Brunei Darul-Salam



Prof. Wong with Prof. Aziz, Prof. Raihanah of API and Dr Wendy Yee of CiTra



Hari Gawai and Ka'amatan

he Faculty celebrated the Hari Gawai and Ka'amatan festival on 27th June 2019. Among the highlights of the celebration were a forum focusing on indigenous communities in Sabah and Sarawak. The event also saw the performances of a Murut dance by a dance troupe from the Sabah State Cultural Centre and an Iban dance by the UM Cultural Centre's group of dancers. The event was jointly organised by the faculty and the Centre for Malaysian Indigenous Studies, UM.

Visit of HE Ambassador of Columbia

n 26 June 2019 the Dean received HE Ambassador of Columbia to Malaysia, Mr Mauricio González López who was visiting the faculty to explore the prospect of promoting studies on Latin America among the students of the faculty. The faculty welcomed this possibility, as well as that of joint research projects between academic staff and the scheduling of talks by scholars from South America at the faculty's various departments.



Visit of Dean to Thammasat University

he Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Prof. Danny Wong, visited the History Department of Thammasat University on July 4, 2019 to explore the possibility of academic and research collaboration. Pulse @ FASS 7/ 2019

Opinion Piece

TRANSBOUNDARY HAZE: A PHYSICAL AND POLITICAL PROBLEM



By Dr Helena Varkkey
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Department of International and Strategic Studies

Feninsula Ma sia have react "very unhealt levels as well.

fter three years of relatively clear skies, haze is once again upon us in Malaysia. As of this time of writing, the Air Pollution Index (API) has reached 367 in Kuching, well into the "hazardous" level. Various parts of Peninsula Malaysia have reached "very unhealthy" The last serious

transboundary haze event was in 2015, with Malaysia's southern states being the worse affected.

Haze is generally linked to forest fires in Indonesia, and to a lesser extent in Malaysia. While forest fires have been a natural part of ecosystem processes in this part of the world, many forest communities have traditionally used fires to clear land for small-scale agriculture, using the slash-and-burn method.

This method has been scaled up in recent decades by medium- and large-scale agribusiness concessionaires as a cheaper alternative to clear land in preparation for planting, mainly oil palm and acacia for pulp and paper.

The Physical Problem

This practise is especially problematic when this land clearing and fires occur on peatlands. Peatlands are naturally flooded all year round.

Their waterlogged condition pauses the decomposition process, effectively locking carbon underwater in perpetuity. Because of this, peatlands are considered excellent carbon sinks.

These important and sensitive peatland ecosystems are protected from development by various laws in Indonesia. However, the high demand for agricultural land has led to large areas of peatlands being given out to well-connected concessionaries.

The drainage of peatlands, as part of the land preparation process, kick-starts the decomposition process and releases large amounts of carbon into the atmosphere, speeding up climate change. It also has the added unfortunate side-effect of abruptly drying out the exposed peat, making it very fire-prone.

When fire is then used to clear the land, the resultant blaze produces smoke that is thick, sooty, and hardy enough to travel across vast distances. The fires burn the peat soil itself and go deep underground, making it notoriously hard to put out bar flooding or sustained heavy rains.

Even if concessionaires do not use fire, accidental fires often break out on disturbed and dried out peatlands as well.

Peat fires are especially dangerous because they send toxic particulate matter up into the air. These tiny particulates, as small as 2.5 microns (PM2.5), easily enter into the lungs, causing both acute and chronic respiratory problems.

Such fires often occurring in the dry season on a yearly basis. For most years, the haze is confined locally. As a result, local communities living closest to the fires must contend with these dangerous conditions regularly.

A recent Harvard University study found that these particulates have contributed to tens of thousands of premature deaths in Indonesia.

A Regional Concern

Every few years, a combination of atmospheric factors in certain years escalate these conditions to the regional level.

The cyclical El Nino weather pattern creates especially hot and dry temperatures every few years, which worsen the fires. When coupled with the Southwest Monsoon winds that push warm air from the southern part of the region upwards, the smoke produced by these fires travel across national boundaries, making the haze "transboundary".

In especially severe years, transboundary haze can affect up to six Southeast Asian countries.

This year, a moderate El Nino and strong monsoon winds is pushing the smoke from the Riau and Jambi regions of Sumatera to Peninsula Malaysia and Singapore, while smoke from fires in Kalimantan is being blown across to East Malaysia.

Smaller fires in Malaysia are also contributing to the haze locally.

Politics at Play

Transboundary haze episodes regularly descend into political finger-pointing among the countries involved, even as parties scramble to control fires and offer assistance.

This year, the Indonesian Environment Minister, Siti Nurbaya, claimed that Indonesian meteorological data revealed that Malaysia's haze was not coming from Indonesia. This was refuted by the Malaysian Environment Minister, Yeo Bee Yin, using evidence to the contrary from the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre.

In the ensuing diplomatic back-andforth, Indonesia then announced that four out of the thirty oil palm concessions seized for investigation related to fires had Malaysian links. Set against the backdrop of the protracted drama that is the EU palm oil "ban" (where the EU is phasing out the use of palm oil for biofuel due to sustainability concerns), this resulted in mixed messages from the Malaysian authorities.

While Yeo maintained that all companies, Malaysian or otherwise, should bear the legal brunt of their practises, the Malaysian Plantations Minister, Teresa Kok, chided Indonesia's action of openly linking haze to palm oil, and thus "playing right into the hands of anti-palm oil campaigners".

This underlines the enormity of the transboundary haze problem in Southeast Asia: it is not only a physical problem of land use and weather patterns, but it is also a highly political one.

Indonesia and Malaysia are the world's largest producers of palm oil, the most widely consumed vegetable oil today. Its importance for the development and economies of both countries, coupled with the negative environmental effects of the crop, has made the industry a political tinderbox.

Well-connected plantation companies implicated in illegal land use and fire continue to be protected by authority figures both locally and in their home countries. Both Indonesia and

Malaysia, facing the threat of declining exports to the EU, vehemently deny claims of unsustainability within the industry while contending with such industry-related environmental crises.

And the awkward reality remains that many of the major palm oil producers in Indonesia are joint ventures with Malaysian and Singaporean companies. This makes it diplomatically difficult for Indonesia's neighbours to come down too hard on Indonesia.

What's new this year?

Just prior to this current haze season, Indonesia announced that it would be making its moratorium on all new deforestation activities, including for oil palm and peatland, permanent. While this announcement was heartily welcomed, there remains the questions of implementation, which continues to be a challenge in decentralised Indonesia.

In Malaysia, after a long wait (many years after Singapore), API readings have finally been announced using PM2.5 parameters, and not the less dangerous PM10. However, these readings are still 24-hour averages, which gives a less-than-accurate indication of air quality compared to hourly updates, which is what is provided in Singapore.

Furthermore, a new directive allows schools to unilaterally close once APIs reach 200, without having to wait for approval from the Education Ministry.

However, Malaysia is still reluctant to take more decisive action, recently announcing that an emergency will only be declared once the API reaches 500. Emergencies have been declared based on lower APIs in the past.

Transboundary Haze-Free ASEAN 2020?

Due to the relatively-haze free years of 2016-2018, spirits were high and hopeful that the region would achieve its vision of a transboundary haze-free ASEAN in 2020.

Jokowi even highlighted this during his presidential campaign, announcing proudly that his administration's efforts has resulted in Indonesia no longer being an "exporter" of haze. Indeed early on in his first term, he hinted that Indonesia could solve the haze problem without ASEAN's "help".

However, this year's episode highlights that there is still much to be done, both at the national and regional level.

Prevention before the fires flare up again is key. Once the haze dissipates this year (and it will – when the rains come in October), ASEAN nations should not fall back into the familiar "out of sight, out of mind" mentality which takes away the urgency of sustained prevention efforts.

ASEAN has been the go-to platform for transboundary haze cooperation in the region for more than 3 decades. While the effectiveness of this platform has been plagued by political limitations due to sovereignty concerns and "good-neighbourliness", this is not a sustainable pattern of engagement.

A framework that allows for more immediate, effective and sustained action and assistance already exists through the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. How bad must the haze be this year to finally compel all the countries involved to take advantage of them?

