



PULSE

E-Bulletin of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences



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A NEW SEMESTER IN THE NEW NORMAL

As we make it through the busiest weeks in the academic year for both students and staff at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), we would like to celebrate the return of seniors and the arrival of freshies.

Welcome one and all. In light of the difficult and anguishing realities of now living in a Corona infected world, academic institutions all over including us here at the University of Malaya, have been forced to adapt to a new normal. To partake in the effort to flatten the curve caused by Covid-19, UM has enforced that all students and staff adhere to the strict and necessary standard operating procedure of always wearing a mask, sanitizing often and where possible, to work and study from home. This also means implementing self-enrolment and online learning till the end of 2020.

In early October this year, we were delighted to meet all new 438 local and 19 international undergraduate students as well as 118 local and 83 foreign postgraduate students through various virtual welcome sessions, where we were able to discuss starting the new semester with everyone. While we acknowledge that the learning curve in the new normal is steep and it will take time for some of us to acclimate to our new modes of online communication with each other, rest assured that the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is determined and prepared to assist with all our students in their time of need.

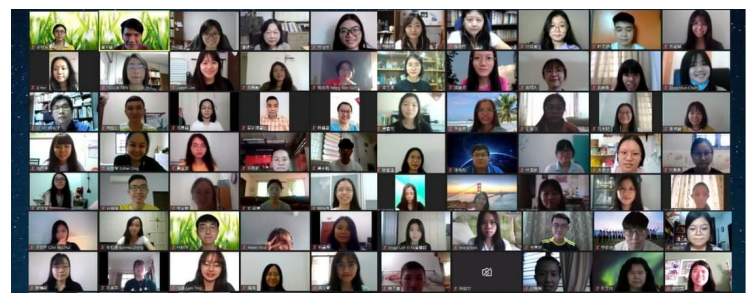
Once again, we are thrilled to have all of you at FASS; please stay healthy, safe and engaged!



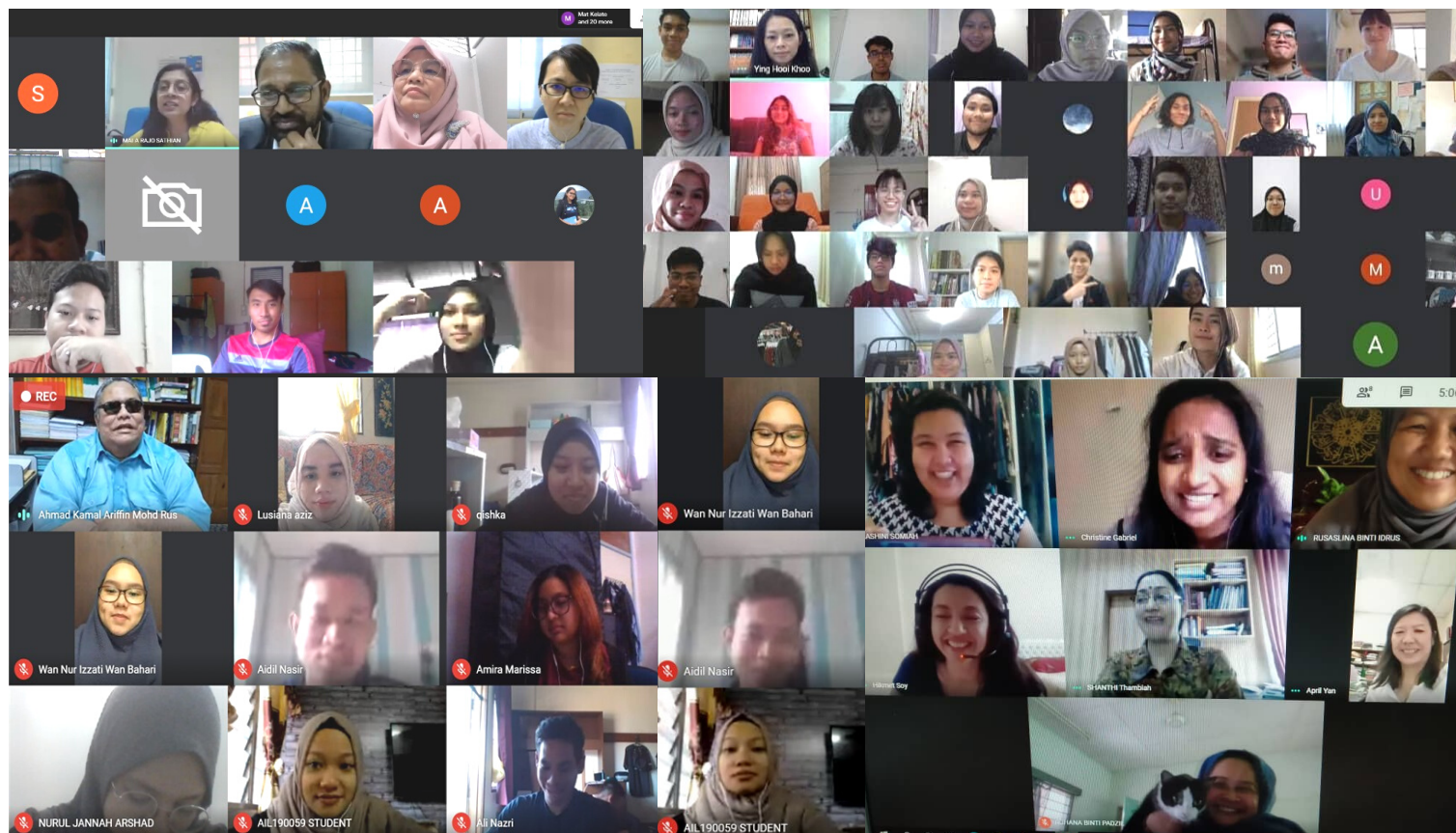
Dean and Deputy Dean (Undergraduate) giving a welcoming talk to the new undergraduate students.



International and Strategic Studies Dept welcoming their postgraduate students



Chinese Studies Dept welcoming new undergraduate students



Faculty members meeting new undergraduate and postgraduate students online for the year 2020/2021

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FASS INAUGURAL LECTURE 2020

THE RADICAL POTENTIAL OF LITERATURE: "MALAYSIA" AS NARRATION

On 3rd September 2020, Professor Dr Sharmani Patricia Gabriel of the Department of English, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, delivered her professorial inaugural lecture, which was the third such lecture at the Faculty over the past decade. In her lecture titled "The Radical Potential of Literature: Malaysia as Narration", Professor Sharmani emphasised that Malaysian literature in English had its roots in the very history of the country and was involved in the cultural processes of nation-making.

In view of the institution of Recovery Movement Control Order (RMCO), the attendees were capped to 100 audiences to ensure physical distancing among the audience as well

as complying with the standard operating procedure (SOP) to curb the spread of Covid-19. Also present at the lecture was YBhg. Professor Dr. Kamila Ghazali, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) Universiti Malaya.

The lecture was chaired by the Dean, Professor Datuk Dr. Danny Wong and Professor Dr. Sharmani delivered a most interesting lecture. As a professor in English literature, Professor Sharmani accentuated that "What Shakespeare did for English literature he did for the English people, what Malaysian literature in English does is for the Malaysian nation. UM has played an important role in this localising trajectory". The momentous event ended on a high note.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO SINCERELY CONGRATULATE
PROFESSOR DR. SHARMANI PATRICIA GABRIEL**



WELCOME TO TOP MANAGEMENT

The Dean's Office at the Faculty of Arts and Social Science is proud to announce two new additions:



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. FIRUZA
BEGHAM MUSTAFA**

Deputy Dean
(Undergraduate Studies)



**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR.
THIRUNAUKARASU A/L SUBRAMANIAM**

Deputy Dean
(Research and Development)

We also would like to thank the previous Deputy Deans for their hard work and dedication to the Faculty

**ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. SAFIAH @ YUSMAH BINTI
MUHAMMAD YUSOFF**

Undergraduate Studies

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR DR. ROSMADI BIN FAUZI

Research and Development

Stranded in South Korea: The FASS's Students Experience

BY NURUL IZZATI GHAZALI

3RD YEAR B.A. IN INTERNATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES



Chonnam National University exchange students in Korean traditional attires and enjoying the culture of South Korea

Due to the global pandemic, the Spring 2020 exchange programme was held differently from any other outbound program that had taken place before. This was mainly due to the many restrictions being imposed to contain widespread of Covid-19. In total, there were seven of us from FASS who flew to South Korea to complete our exchange programme and we were enrolled to universities that we had applied to. In mid-February, Covid-19 cases started to increase exponentially and the government of South Korea took serious action by implementing social order to decrease the number of cases.

Our host university had requested for arrival at Yonsei University to begin much earlier than the supposed date to complete a mandatory quarantine process. And so, we changed our flight dates and left early for South Korea to meet the university's requirement. Clueless of what was going to happen, at that time we were still convinced that we would have a normal exchange program after we had fulfilled the quarantine order. Thus, despite the unexpected setback in the beginning of our journey, we were still very much enthusiastic to participate in the program.

Yonsei University had arranged a makeshift quarantine centre in one of the dormitories. We were isolated in our designated room under supervision for 14 days. During the quarantine period, meals and necessities were provided by the university and everything was delivered to our front door. We were told to record our temperature twice a day and on the last day of the quarantine, we had to report our health condition to the assigned officer. After

completing 14 days of isolation, we were moved to another dormitory and this time we had the chance to have other roommates.

Once we learned that the situation in South Korea was worsening, the university released an official statement regarding the learning system. The university had to adhere to the government order which required the citizens to fully practice physical and social distancing. Therefore, all the classes that semester had to be conducted online to avoid physical interaction. Throughout the semester, we had online lectures and discussion via Zoom, Discord and Google meet. It wasn't easy, but lecturers in Yonsei University were very helpful to students, particularly to the foreign ones who were not used to the new learning system. Meanwhile, students who lived on campus were provided with a few facilities such as the library, study lounge, cafeteria, and parks. However, the limited number of students residing in the dormitory made it difficult to be with other local students.

After a while, the South Korean government had eased Coronavirus restrictions as the country showed signs of stability after a consistent drop in the number of positive cases. Our coordinator had arranged field trips for us to participate with other foreign students. We had a chance to visit some interesting places including Busan, Nami Island and Seoul that were initially included in the study plan in one of our classes. We created wonderful memories with the other students who came along. Besides that, there were no club activities available for us to partake in, leaving us to focus only on academic



Having a Hari Raya feast with our close foreign friends who are also doing exchange program in Yonsei University

assessments. Subsequently, we completed our exchange programme by taking the final examinations virtually. As our program ended, we moved out of the university dormitory.



Day trip to Nami Island with Yonsei's AIMS coordinator

Initially some of us had planned to extend our stay in South Korea and we had booked a return flight several days after the moving out date. We believed at that moment that everything was going according to plan, but soon, our flights had been cancelled and fear started to dawn on us. At first, we felt that the online learning was our biggest setback, limiting the experience of our exchange program, but we soon learned this was not the case. Few other Malaysian students from Chonnam National University had actually booked a flight through Air Asia a few days after the semester ended, and their flights were cancelled as well, and soon there were no available flight by Airasia at all. Some of us then opted for Malaysia Airlines just like those who had planned to extend their stay for several days had done, as we believed there were no issues about cancellations. We bought the tickets, but not long after, MAS had emailed to notify us that all our flight were cancelled and the earliest flight back to Malaysia would be in September. This news had forced everyone to extend their stay in South Korea a little bit longer than expected.



Wonju city health personnel preparing swab test on exchange students in Yonsei University after observing 14 days of quarantine.

Both MAS and Air Asia were unable to make a quick refund on the cancellation. Air Asia offered to compensate with only travelling vouchers and MAS's office in Seoul imposed a processing fee in refunding our money, which would take at least three to six months. In distress, we reached out to the Malaysian embassy in Seoul regarding the concerns and problems we were facing. In the meeting, the officers advised us to purchase flight tickets from different airlines but informed us that they did not have the capacity to assist us financially nor negotiate with the airlines on our behalf, which we knew would not make any difference. Because of this, all of us suffered financially and were left in a state of confusion and fear since we needed money to survive in Korea for an uncertain period.

After taking some initiatives to find a solution for the crisis, we updated the UM ISC officers about our condition. The officers then set up a virtual meeting with Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Kamila Ghazali to find a solution to our problem. We were informed that UM had tried their very best to help all of the students that were stranded in South Korea. Soon after, En. Hilmi from FASS Dean's office reached out to us to solve one of our main problems which was accommodation. He had booked us a place to stay for the rest of our extension period in Seoul. We felt relieved and grateful for the help that was given to us.

On the August 10th, ISC officers contacted us to break some much awaited good news: UM had booked all of us a return flight from Korean Air with their emergency fund. The process of returning home went smoothly and we complied with the Covid-19 standard of procedure set out by the Malaysian government. Overall, we did not get stranded in South Korea for too long as our problems were quickly tackled by UM. It was a rich experience and we would take this opportunity to thank every officer and staff who was involved in the process of getting us home in the midst of a challenging time.



A relieved selfie of UM students at Incheon airport before boarding the flight

An Internship During the New Normal

Alex Yap Wen Kang
B.A in Southeast Asian Studies

Wearing face mask, social distancing, and working from home have become a new normal since the COVID-19 pandemic broke out worldwide. Since the 18th of March, the Malaysian federal government initiated the Movement Control Order (MCO) in response to the pandemic. The presence of Coronavirus has examined my ability and skill during my internship in the new normal.

I began my internship the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) before the Covid-19 outbreak. The Human Resource division of the ministry have placed me under the Division of Communication and Public Diplomacy (DCPC). My role in the organization is to help DCPC to disseminate the latest news of the ministry, especially regarding the government policy related to international issues. During my internship in MOFA, I was responsible in supervising the ministry's social media accounts in order to respond promptly to the public inquiries. In addition to that, I was also assigned to several international events as a secretariat, which one of them was the Conference on The Question of Palestine: "Southeast Asian Support for the Rights of the Palestinian People", which was held in KLCC.



My team (above) assigned to register attendance of the media/journalist during the International Conference "The Question of Palestine and The United Nations" (below) in KLCC

I was also given a chance to create infographics related to the foreign policy of the ministry. Teamwork is something that is crucial as I always had to collaborate with colleagues from different departments in organizing events in the ministry. Those times were definitely valuable experience during my first month of internship.

However, with the outbreak of coronavirus that then brought Malaysia into the implementation of MCO period



Left:
Attending a media conference at Wisma Putra

gave a big impact to my internship. The consular service of ministry has been reduced and appointments needed to be done via email. And even though the consular service was provided to the public during the MCO, there were still lack of manpower. This was because MOFA has reduced the number of staff working in the office and encourage them to work from home. All events within the ministry were cancelled or postponed to another date. Therefore, my supervisor instructed me to work from home during the Movement Control Order (MCO). Initially, it was challenging for me to adapt to the new normal of work from home as I used to have face to face meeting with my supervisor to discuss concerning tasks given. As time passed by, I finally adapted to work from home style and contacted my supervisor three times per week to update on the tasks. When the Restricted Movement Control Order (RMCO) was introduced and we were allowed to work again in the office, everyone was required to queue to scan their body temperature before entering. Hand sanitizers were placed in every corner of the office. Despite all of these changes during my internship, the new normal of work from home gave me an opportunity to learn new lessons.

Communication was definitely a very important key during the internship. I always updated my task with supervisor through email and WhatsApp so that I could follow up on the latest assignments given. Last but not least, it is easy to lose productivity of work with the absence of an office environment. Therefore, I always keep the house clean and organized to ease my mind during work hours.

To summarize, we are surrounded by many surprising and unexpected events right now, so we must always be on our feet, learn to be flexible, and adapt to the new kind of normal. Students should absolutely make full use of the latest technology and apply it to ease their internships. Stay safe and take care whenever you are.

Experiencing Malaysia through the eyes of an Ivorian

Q1. Please introduce yourself.

Hello! My name is Ousmane Koffi Abdoulaye from Côte d'Ivoire of West Africa.

First of all, I would like to say thank you for having me included for this e-Bulletin issue. Indeed, I'm grateful to the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Universiti Malaya, for giving me a chance to pursue my postgraduate programme here. Côte d'Ivoire, the official country's name or you might know it as Ivory is a French-speaking country. Now, let me tell you how I usually introduce my country to most Malaysians "Do you know Didier Drogba, the Chelsea football player?", They will say "OH Yes! (Ivory Coast)", then I would say, "Yes, there you go, he is my countrymate." So because of him, I am able to start a conversation with most Malaysians about my country. In my family, I have a two sibling, I am the youngest of my family. Now, I am married and blessed with a daughter.

Prior to my education in Malaysia, I had my primary education in home country and then moved to Sudan to complete the secondary education. Then, I got a BSc in Information Technology at the International University of Africa.

Q2. What do people from your country think about Malaysia and the region? Why?

The people from Ivory Coast do not know much about the Southeast Asian region, particularly Malaysia, due to vast difference in distance and time zone; Malaysia is 8 hours ahead of Ivory Coast. In addition to that, there is no direct flights from Ivory Coast to Malaysia and vice versa, the journey takes two days to the Ivory Coast from Malaysia, can you imagine! Thus, I go back home for holiday, they would get asked about Malaysia and where it is located, so I will say it is near Singapore.

Moreover, there weren't embassies between the two countries until 2008, when the Ivory Coast finally offered a representative to Malaysia; an Honorary Consulate General that keeps the two countries' diplomatic relations' established. For your information,



Malaysia is the biggest importer of Palm Oil to the West African region including the Ivory Coast. There are also some Malaysian investors that have established companies in Ivory Coast for cocoa production. As Ivory Coast is the world's leading producer of cocoa, it also has ample raw materials like coffee, cashew nuts; rubber, but lacks the expertise and technology to move downstream into manufacturing. Hence, I hope to be the bridge between the two countries, to facilitate and revitalize the bilateral relation.

Q3. How did you stumble upon UM and what made you apply for a PhD here?

During the period when I was in Sudan, I heard about Malaysia from friends who furthered their studies at the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). I wanted to experience education abroad, I decided to pursue my post-graduate programme in Malaysia. My dream was to study journalism or become a journalist. I stumbled upon Universiti Malaya because it was a world-recognized research-based institution in South-East Asia. I wanted to make a difference, so I asked some Ivorians, who were studying in Malaysia on my application to a graduate programme in Media and Communication Studies.

I had a keen interest in issues related to communication and health information system in Cote d'Ivoire, and thanks to Allah, I have successfully enrolled here. I am now the second Ivorian that has attended UM and will be graduating soon from this prestigious institution. The reason I wanted to pursue my PhD was because I sought to have an expertise in areas with a strong understanding of current health communication issues, which will avail me of all necessary scopes for the actualization of my noble dream.

Q4. How was your experience in the UM have been so far?

I am fluent and understand three foreign languages (Arabic, French, and English), and since coming to this country, a bit of Malay. It has been an opportunity for me to learn from Malaysia as an emerging country, with its educational facilities, and so forth. As a student and researcher, Universiti Malaya has provided me with opportunities to hone my language practice, academic, and research experience. Throughout my educational experience and cultural diversity exposure in Malaysia, I have adopted the skills of how to deal with a different social and diverse environment.

Besides, seminars here are spaces that allows for effective learning experiences and knowledge sharing. I have attended a couple of seminars and international conferences to discuss and share the academic trends of my research, as I also have scholarly articles published in scientific journals in the field of health communication campaigns. My



appreciation to my supervisor Professor Madya Datin Dr. Hasmah Zanuddin, for inspiring me during her supervision and encouragement. Also, Dr. Amirah Firdaus, for her valuable advice and comments during the course of my Ph.D. program. Not to forget, Associate Prof. Hamed Adnan, who inspired me to register for a Ph.D. at the University of Malaya, to develop the horizon of my skills.

Q5. We would like to know more about your research. Please give us a summary and maybe some highlights of your candidature.

My research examines public opinion on the quality of health information and healthcare services delivery, given the health situation of this global pandemic, my research is relatively scarce as health communication is a new field in the discipline of communication, especially within the role of Ivorian online newspapers' health news coverage in promoting attitude and health behaviour change among the people of Ivory Coast. In this contexts, people may lack access to health information, due to lack of sufficient health awareness and campaigns.

Taking into consideration the significance of the findings, the study has achieved its objectives. : To use health information technologies to improve the health campaigns and information system, which will certainly influence the dissemination of information and create health awareness. This research will contribute in improving to the field of health communication and information, as well as media health campaign gaps in the health information systems. Thus, I hope I would be able to continue playing a significant role in contributing meaningfully towards the body of knowledge in the field of health communication research and public health campaigns.

Ousmane Koffi Abdoulaye has successfully received his Doctorate in the Media and Communication Studies, Universiti Malaya in October 2020

Left:
Part of my International Conference, 2017

2020: A Historian's Duty to Remember

BY DR. NUR DAYANA MOHAMED ARIFFIN
HISTORY DEPARTMENT



As a historian, “remembering” is synonymous with “writing”, a process whereby thoughts and data are transferred onto documents for reference of future generations. In remembrance, there is the element of self (the writer), the facts (dates, places, names); and in between the self and historical facts lies the fragile thread which is the thread that usually draws readers in, and in successful cases—make them stay. This is the interpretation of history, the construction of “truth” that is more valuable to the historical body of knowledge than the dry facts alone. A historian muses over the best or the most lucid way to present this truth. It is a task that many confound with those of a novelist or a reporter. “How can I draw people in and make them interested in what I am trying to say about what has happened?” At this point, a collection of tools, an arsenal of skills and knowledge are dislodged from the historian’s little treasure box—made of memories, lessons, anecdotes, things read and things heard. Then, the historian writes.

2020 is one of those years, in an annalistic shelf of the human race, that will stand out and be remembered unkindly. From bush fires that enraged Australia, the coronavirus that plagued over the globe, and the

tumultuous politics in Malaysia. Not to mention how our everyday matters are affected. This year we have spent (probably) more, made less, travel less (or not at all), we see each other less, make minimum contact, presumably at some point lost touch with some friends, and sadly, for some of us, lost our jobs, our homes and

“2020 is an opportunity for an in-depth investigation into the plight of our community, and what Malaysians are made of. Are we a society of such a glaring class divide?”

our health. It is a devastating year. One that many would not want to be remembered. Many would find it a struggle to recuperate from. As 2021 descends on us, there lies hope. There also lies anxiety, scepticism—will we get over this? Will we finally move on from this dreadful phase and live our lives somewhat normally? Can academia return to a lecture hall full of students, hear them knocking at our door, buy them dinner and — or will they remain in their homes and we shall, as of now, be acquainted online, and nothing more?

Yet, a historian has to remember. A historian is obligated to look back at the year 2020 with every ounce of objectivity he or she could muster and record the year, analyses the events as best as one could. What sets the historian apart from a novelist or a reporter, or maybe even one historian from another is how the thread of interpretation is weaved and

presented. The year 2020 is an opportunity for a historian, an academician, be as it may, a curse for many others. 2020 is an opportunity for an in-depth investigation into the plight of our community, and what Malaysians are made of. Are we a society of such a glaring class divide? 2020 has exposed so many premises for a study into our modern “class” system. The usage of T20, M40, and B40 to denote income categories has reached, thanks to social media, the masses. The disparity between the rural and the urban, the ruling elite, and the rakyat is one of the most heated conversations both online and in real life. Anger lies beneath these discussions.

“Like the fall of Melaka, the World Wars, and the formation of Malaysia, 2020 can be pushed and pull into various directions, and from it, forms the valuable thread of a plethora of interpretations, of truths, of a history.”

What matters, from an academic point of view, is the dismantling of these perceptions and the real situation which can be unearthed therein. What is the current class structure? What are the factors which help perpetuate these class categories and why has economic policies and education has not to yield solutions? There are also arguments on minimum wage. Why have we yet to embrace this policy? What is the relevance of tertiary education when so many of our graduates only fill in the minimum wage jobs? Have our industrial links yet to become beneficial or has it benefited only a handful of

individuals, depending on their backgrounds and needless to say, opportunities? Historically, what contributes to this development? If we trace the trajectory of history, what have we missed, and for the sake of the existing body of scholarship, can we reflect on the ongoing arguments and see what else can we contribute, as academicians, as historians, to the study of class and society in Malaysia?

This is also the year to expand the sources of our history. Social media is such a potent, powerful medium that if neglected as a source of research, we might detract from the gist of many problems that arise globally and nationally. What can a historian discover by, say, studying a series of tweets over the year, on a particular issue? For instance, what does Malaysian say on Twitter and Facebook on the Movement Control Order? There is an effort to look at the different ways Malaysians adopt, based on race, class, and locality (Arina ArisAzlan, et al, 2020). As a historian, I see how much can I gain from looking at the same problem from a historical point of view using social media. Throughout 2020, how had our thoughts and understanding developed? What factors altered our behaviour? How can we compare the formation of ideas on social media with the print media in the 1920 and 1930s? How can this be a possible way to look at our education system from an alternate point of view? Social media, albeit the bad reputation it justifiably receives from the intellectual community, is truly a valuable source to comprehend and organize the patterns of perceptions and sentiments of our society, over time.

2020 can be interpreted in many ways. It can be recorded as a year of tragedies, a period of dramatic modification of our norms, a beginning to the reforms of our political stances, social conventions, and commercial practices. 2020 is a historian’s gold mine. Like the fall of Melaka, the World Wars, and the formation of Malaysia, 2020 can be pushed and pull into various directions, and from it, forms the valuable thread of a plethora of interpretations, of truths, of a history. This year, remembrance comes with an intellectual obligation, as we realize we cannot look at life nor in academia, the same way again.

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THE APPLE DOESN'T FALL FAR FROM THE TREE

MARY ANN THOMAS

FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

2004 – 2007

ACT I, SCENE I – A STEP INTO UNCHARTED TERRITORY

I first stepped foot into Universiti Malaya (UM) more than a decade ago, back in 2004. I finally gained admission to one of the country's best local public institutions. Up till 2004, UM was just a place I used to pass on my way back from Form 6 and a place I used to drive past. I heard much about the university, particularly the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences from my father, who is also an alumnus. Who would have thought the phrase "like father, like daughter," would become a reality. The next decision I had to make was – what I wanted to major in. Of course, this decision was not too tough, given I had always loved English – both the language and the literature. The English Department was definitely the best option. I also decided on the path of a full minor, as opposed to a mixed minor. The Gender Studies Programme was it. The only downside to this decision was the uphill walks to reach the department for tutorials.

“I was continually challenged to see beyond the obvious, to fearlessly question and provide counter arguments with clarity, sound reasoning and to communicate convincingly, logically.”

The best part of my first semester in UM was the fact that I only had classes on Mondays and Wednesdays. Long days, but it was a gentle introduction to University life. Of course, my stamina was improved, what with the rush between English Department, located at the top most floor of the faculty, and the Gender Studies tutorial rooms, located at the other end of the faculty and also on the top most floors. I used to wonder what I got myself into when selecting my subjects for the semesters. No regrets though.

All that I learnt in the English Department, including Critical Writing and Thinking, Ways of Reading Literature, the various periods of Literature have equipped me well, though it was not apparent at that point in time. I was more focused on excelling and doing well, which I did. Making it to the Dean's List was a personal achievement. I would go on in my career increasingly acknowledging that the ability I have to perform in my career, can be attributed to the foundations laid at the Faculty. The Gender Studies Programme opened my eyes to society and culture and, I personally feel, moulded me into a person who is more sensitive of gender roles in all levels of society.

Education is more than a piece of paper or a certificate to be obtained. It is unlocking the treasure chest of possibilities of one's potential and psyche. It is a journey that opens the mind and allows one to develop the critical skill of analysis, criticism and judgement. I will forever treasure this skill that I learnt and developed over my three years with the faculty. There was a blend of enhanced understanding, the development of cognitive framework which resulted in the ability to critically evaluate almost any given content. This skill would come in handy in my journey, post-UM. My three years in UM allowed me to value the development of discernment, critical analysis and judgement. I was continually challenged to see beyond the obvious, to fearlessly question and provide counter arguments with clarity, sound reasoning and to communicate convincingly, logically. I definitely attribute these skills to UM, and the Faculty, in particular.

ACT I, SCENE II – A THOUSAND MILES AWAY

While waiting for our graduation, it was clear I still had my heart in UM. I had considered the idea of having a career

in the Faculty. I was a Research Assistant for one of the Associate Professors of the English Department for six months for a project on Literature and Travel.

Life had other plans.

The day I graduated from UM, was the day I went to MABECS to explore options in furthering my studies. I had hoped to further my studies in Literature or something along those lines. Three months later, I was on a flight headed for Scene II, the United Kingdom. I ended up spending a year in the University of Bath and returned with a Masters of Science in Management, with a specialisation in Human Resource Management, as well as a letter to report for duty at the Public Service Department (Jabatan Perkhidmatan Awam).

The Public Services Commission had a job fair while I was there and my “let’s try our luck” move became reality. UM had a role in me surviving my year-long studies in the UK. While many course mates had previous job experiences, I was a “freshie”. However, the analytical (and writing) skills I developed in UM helped me steer my way through my Masters.

ACT I, SCENE III – A NATION TO SERVE

I started my first job as an Administrative and Diplomatic Officer, more commonly known as Pegawai Tadbir dan Diplomatik (PTD). I treasure the diversity of learning experiences put together by INTAN for the six months Diploma in Public Administration Programme for PTD officers. Having begun my career in the Prime Minister’s Department, after five and a half years, I moved on to the Ministry of Finance. Who would have thought an Arts graduate would end up in anything economics or finance related. However, the skills I gained over my 3 years in UM had prepared me for this job – the analysis, the critical sieving of complex and diverse concepts, the reports, the speeches and more.

Of course, I hope I have done UM proud by not disappointing in the field of language. I am proud to say that my UM crucible experience has stood me in good stead – I have served the Economic Council, which was chaired by the Honourable Prime Minister, been a rapporteur for International Meetings (sounds simple, but try doing so without an economics background), coordinated International Meetings, written speeches for Senior Civil Servants as well as set up and negotiated for the presence of International Organisations in Malaysia. These experiences are feathers in my cap and my knowledge of diversity as well as my ability to quickly digest matters and sum it up is all attributed to the Faculty.

Education is a journey and I took the challenge to apply learning to context. Arts, if not translated, remains a concept. I had the opportunity of applying my learning in the context of organisations, performance, people and behaviour. Language has opened horizons of understanding, digging deep, seeing connections and intricacies in the complexities of organisations. I have witnessed the dynamics of human behaviour in organisations. The diversity of Public Service organisations, with its multilevel considerations and the labyrinth of policy deliberations, is indeed a never-ending quest that I am glad to be in. I have decided to take the bull by the horns and destroy the myth that Public Service is a walk in the park. It is the individual who determines the impact and footprint one leaves, in whatever vocation or calling in life one undertakes. It is said, life has a lot of chapters, scenes. I am thankful that, for me, it included the memorable, enriching and fulfilling time in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, UM.

ACT I, SCENE IV – A CRUCIBLE OF LIFE: GROWING PAINS

If I had to sum my journey in UM (especially in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences) right up to where I am today

“The captain should always have the courage and desire to sail the high seas, ever excited about the adventures and challenges it brings.”

(which of course is not as long or as much in comparison to the many people before me) and reflect on the Faculty and my alma mater, I would say this:

- Do not yield to the environmental demand to dilute the goals of education. The aim is to produce graduates of quality and not churn out university leavers;
- English has to be studied with intensity and standard that are uncompromising. We do not want to face those belittling or being condescending of the value of this field or the slide in the quality of the graduates;
- Gender and its related issues have to be understood in totality and with sensitivity. The goal is for graduates who are aware of the diverse and complex world we live in and be the agents of change and champions of inclusivity, as well as not stand for inequality or leaving any group of society out;
- The faculty has thus far positioned itself well, but sustainability is a challenge. We never want to see the day where this institution we love so much, loses its lustre, bringing grave consequences to its graduates, organizations they work in, and consequently, the nation.



Mary Ann Thomas received her Bachelor of Arts (Major: English Literature, Minor: Gender Studies) from Universiti Malaya and MSc. in Management (Specialisation in Human Resource Management) from the University of Bath, United Kingdom. She is currently serving the Government as a Principal Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Finance. She has been with the Administrative and Diplomatic Service since 2008.

ACT I, SCENE V – WHAT LIES AHEAD: OPEN SEAS

It has been my wish to have Scene V of my life, to gain a Doctorate, take scene in UM. I am sincerely filled with joy (coupled with a tad of pride) whenever I come across a UM graduate, more so if the person is from the same Faculty. Biasness aside, I say with full confidence that the Faculty has produced graduates who are competent and capable – at least the ones I have met over the years. It is my conviction that the Faculty (teaching staff) determines the quality of output of its graduates – water cannot rise higher than its source. This is crucial towards ensuring that its graduates do not drift into mediocrity. The climb back to excellence would then be near impossible.

It is my hope that those who serve as captains of the ship, always steer a clear course, as has always been the case thus far. We should never stay satisfied in shallow waters, hugging the shores. The captain should always have the courage and desire to sail the high seas, ever excited about the adventures and challenges it brings. In today's interconnected, transparent, globalised world, with the advancements of digital transformation, we are evaluated globally, like it or not. This is a welcome challenge for us to compete with the best, as well as an intriguing opportunity to be there among the elite. The current Faculty, together with the alumni of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences should look forward to soaring to greater heights and staying there.



Adding Vulnerability to Our Understanding of Poverty: Towards a More Gender Inclusive Approach to Policy Response and Practice

BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR.
DR. SHANTHI A/P THAMBIAH

This paper was presented at the UNGKU AZIZ BROWN BAG WEBINAR SERIES 2020, on the 24th September 2020. The purpose of this webinar is to provide a platform for academics, development practitioners, policymakers, NGOs and stakeholders to share their work and ideas on development issues.

The presentation focused on the recent revision that was made to the poverty line income from RM980 to RM2,208 which increased the number of households considered poor to over 400,000 in Malaysia. The presentation unpacked the value of including vulnerability in our policy response and practice in addressing poverty because relying on the Poverty Line Income alone tend to exclude large numbers of people. In addition, the presentation highlighted that gender related inequalities are pervasive and is another factor that contributes to vulnerability of women, children, and the elderly.

Vulnerability is a much more precise measurement of exposure to risk and a useful concept to link to our understanding of poverty. Vulnerability is a forward-looking concept compared to poverty and hence appropriate for policymaking. Capturing the multidimensional aspects of changing socioeconomic well-being in communities requires identification of both levels of poverty and types of vulnerability.

The concept of vulnerability, although often used as a synonym for poverty is however, different in its meaning. Poverty measures are generally fixed in time. Poverty is essentially a static concept because it relies on the Poverty Line Income which is unable to be comprehensive in its coverage of people in need of help. By contrast, vulnerability is a more dynamic concept and is better able to capture change processes as people move in and out of poverty.



Dr. Sharifah Muhaifah Shahabudin, Dr. Shanthi Thambiah, Mr. Adzmel Mahmud (Director, LPPKN), Dr. Rohana Jani (Acting Director, Centre for Development Studies)

The presentation concluded by emphasising the need to impress on policymakers on the importance of placing gender and vulnerability at the heart of their vision and strategies in not leaving anyone behind in Malaysia in the post Covid-19 recovery strategies. Women have immediate practical and strategic needs. Policy responses to the Covid-19 pandemic have not been sufficiently considerate of gender.

Strategic policy responses are needed that include women in the development of policy responses, the control of resources and in the decision-making affecting them. Understanding the extent to which Covid-19 affects women and men differently will be fundamental to understanding the broader economic and social impact of this pandemic both during the crisis and during the recovery period. It is critical that public policies are proactive in devising transformative approaches that address women's vulnerability in the context of this pandemic. Further research involving observation and measurement to understand the direct impact and full extent of the pandemic on women's productive, reproductive and community life is urgently needed.

Faculty Members Unpack Sabah State Elections 2020



Associate Prof. Dr. Hamidin on Astro Awani to provide analysis on the candidate nomination day

The Sabah State elections in 2020 was a unique political phenomenon with a number of critical issues of focus throughout the entire campaign; unity politics, untrustworthy local leaders, state- federal relations, poverty and income groups, state resources, indigenous representation, and the influx of migrants into the state. For one of the more debated local political events of 2020 (among others), two faculty members were able to lend their expertise to public discourse.

Associate Prof. Dr. Hamidin Abdul Hamid of the Department of History, was invited to speak on Astro Awani Channel 501 in its programme: "Sabah Memilih" and again on NASIONALfm. For the topic "General Election of DUN Sabah: A Trigger of the Political Maturity in Malaysia?" . On both occasions, he provided deep historical background on the socio-political issues plaguing Sabah.

Dr. Vilashini Somiah from the Gender Studies Department was also active in unpacking youth and gender related issues in the run-up to the state elections. She was featured on Astro Awani's Let's Talk Series on "Unpacking Sabah Bangkit" and was also a panelist at University of Nottingham's Asia Research Institute on "Sabah State Election Primer: Borneo Goes to The Poll". She also offered Bernama a phone interview on the day of the election from Sabah itself.

UNPACKING SABAH BANGKIT

Let's Talk
WITH SHARAAD KUTTAN

19 September 2020 @ 10 PM
Catch it on CH 501 and astroawani.com

University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute-Malaysia Seminar presents
Sabah State Election Primer: Borneo Goes to Polls

Details
Date: 10 September 2020, Thursday
Time: 15:00 to 16:30
Location: Online via Microsoft Teams

To register your attendance, kindly e-mail UoNARI@nottingham.edu.my

Panelists: DR BRIDGET WELSH, DR VILASHINI SOMIAH, PHILIP GOLINGAI

University of Nottingham Asia Research Institute - Malaysia

Dr. Vilashini on Astro Awani and University of Nottingham's Asia Research Institute for Sabah state election talks

Platform 'Over The Top'

ANALISIS

PLATFORM 'OVER THE TOP': BEBAS TANPA KAWALAN?

RABU, 2 SEPTEMBER, 2020, 9 MALAM

Panelists: SYAH MOHAMED GEO NUFFIRAH, PROF. DR. AZIZAH HAMZAH, AHMAD IDHAM RIMAD NADIRI, NADZIRAH SHARINGATI

TV ALHIJRAH, iflix, ANALISIS TV ALHIJRAH, tvalhijrah

Profesor Azizah Hamzah was invited to a panel on TV Al-hijrah entitled "Platform 'Over The Top': Bebas Tanpa Kawalan" which discussed the lack of newer tax frameworks and policies in dealing with international new media content and outlets.

The discussion focused on the government's challenge in enforcing taxes on digital platforms and how content providers have to bear with foreign content flooding the local market without the availability of counter products from Malaysia.

Profesor Azizah ended by encouraging local content creators to push through and find new and creative ways of producing Malaysian friendly media content, instead of accepting defeat.

Online Summer Programme - SEPVrUM 2020



Among the participants of the virtual Summer Enrichment Programme

Summer Enrichment Programme (SEP), Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences is one of many Summer programmes that is moving its 2020 summer programme online due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Like other programmes, SEP has switched its summer curriculum to online delivery, offering sessions over video-conferencing.

Rebranding as Summer Enrichment Programme-Virtual Mobility (SEPVrUM) due to its nature and by making adjustments and increasing flexibility, SEPVrUM may quite likely still experience a positive effect on their summer programme enrolment this year, despite the pandemic. Indeed, the programme presented a perfect time for the Faculty to pilot new strategies not usually in their repertoire, and instead tried to rebuild something different, especially enrichment and other targeted programmes that could test out a blended model.

This fall intake, with over 50 participants, the SEPVrUM comprised an offline introductory module and five online modules which covered the core topics of intercultural communication. Participants from Japan universities, Thailand, and also from the Universiti Malaya have had the opportunity to be connected live to other participants while providing them with the opportunity to enjoy this experience from home. As the online summer school experience is bound to look a little bit different from one programme to the other, SEPVrUM augmented its unique feature by providing one-to-one i-Smart Buddy of Global Network Club (GNC) to assist their respective buddies in terms of attendance or activity performances. The programme not only met but exceeded student expectations in this uncertain time and its success story was even covered in Japan newspaper - The Asahi Shimbun.

Link to the Newspaper:

<https://www.asahi.com/edu/article/13758689>

Upgrading Journals of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2020

The Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS), Universiti Malaya recently organized an online workshop entitled 'Upgrading Journals of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences 2020' on Friday, 9th October 2020. The workshop was attended by the Head of Departments and the Chief Editor of Journals based at the Faculty.

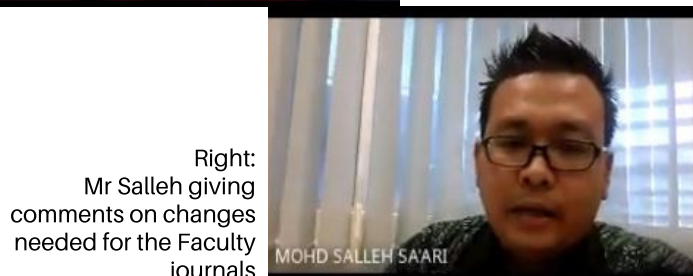
The objectives of the workshop are two-fold namely assisting journals managed by various departments and the Faculty to be indexed in MyCite (Malaysian Citation Index) under the Malaysian Abstracting and Indexing System (MyAIS) as well as to upgrade the journals that has already been indexed to a more prominent indexing such as ESCI / SCOPUS / ISI.

Two guest speakers were invited to conduct the workshop. The first speaker, Professor Dr. Faridah Ibrahim who is a Professor and the Head of Postgraduate Program for Infrastructure University Kuala Lumpur conducted a session entitled 'Upgrading In-house Journals: Going for Scopus'. She is also a Former Editor-In-Chief for a Scopus indexed journal namely Journal of Communication (also known as Malaysian Journal of Communication).

The second talk was delivered by Mr. Mohd Salleh Sa'ari, Coordinator of Research Support Unit, Research Services Center, Institute of Management & Research Services (IPPP), University of Malaya. The title of his presentation is 'Upgrading Journals at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya'. It is hoped that this workshop is beneficial and simultaneously can elevate journals based at the FASS to soar to greater height.



Left:
Prof. Dr. Faridah on her topic of 'Why SCOPUS?'



Right:
Mr Salleh giving comments on changes needed for the Faculty journals

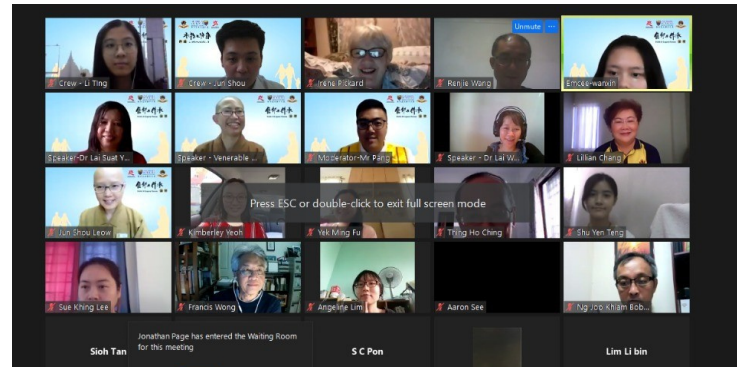
Faith and Legacy Forum On “Women and Buddhism”



Top: Venerable Dr Jue Wei and Dr Lai Wan Teng
Bottom: Mr Pang Zi Yue as the moderator with Dr Lai Suat Yan

Dr Lai Suat Yan Coordinator and Senior Lecturer of the Gender Studies Program, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was one of the three panel speakers for the topic “Women and Buddhism” for the Faith and Legacy Forum organized on 19 September by the Fo Guang Shan Education Center of Malaysia, the Chinese Department of the University of Malaya and the Buddhist Society of the University of Malaya. She discussed gender inequality in the Buddhist context from three dimensions, namely, Buddhist teachings, Buddhist institutions and Buddhist practices. Her focus was on how Asian female Buddhist are the agents of social change as they reclaim their heritage to be spiritual leaders and to be ordained as female monastic based on the Thai context in. The situation in Indonesia and Japan was also drawn upon.

Venerable Dr Jue Wei, Director of the Humanistic Buddhism Center and Senior Lecturer at the Nan Tien



Speakers and participants of the Faith and Legacy Forum on “Women and Buddhism”.

Institute in Australia focused on the buddhist teachings of the Four Noble Truths as an expression of equality. For example, dukkha (suffering) is ubiquitous regardless of gender. Furthermore, everyone has a Buddha nature and can awaken to the path.

Dr Lai Wan Teng, Lecturer at the Center for Research on Women and Gender (KANITA), University Sains of Malaysia through sharing her own story narrated on the causes and consequences of gender inequality. She also highlighted the Global Gender Gap Report that indicated that gender equality is still not achieved in many countries particularly in the political and economic spheres.

The forum was held via zoom and attended by around 70 participants from Malaysia and Australia. It was moderated by Mr Pang Zi Yue, Secretary of the Buddha’s Light International Association, Malaysia Chapter.

Haze and Social (In)Justice in Southeast Asia: Past Experience and What Next?

Dr. Helena Varkkey, from the Department of Strategic and International Studies, represented the faculty on 29 July 2020 at the International Conference on New Research in

International Development, Human Rights, and International Relations at a time of Disruption. The discussion was organized online by the Center for Social Development Studies (CSDS) of the Faculty of Political Science, Chulalongkorn University as part of the Political Ecology in Asia Seminar Series. The seminar aimed at unpacking past experiences of air pollution and the heated debates that have ensued, and to look to the future given that the COVID-19 pandemic is disrupting and has the possibility to transform many aspects of future society-environment relations.



Please scan the QR code to visit the event webpage
or visit www.csdcs-chula.org

Journey to Antarctica Talk and Career Talk Forum at MCKK



Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rosmadi talking to the students on his experience in Antarctica



Students of International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme, MCKK listening to the talk.

On August 15, 2020, Associate Professor Dr. Rosmadi Fauzi, was invited for a sharing session with 300 students of the International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme and later that day, a fellow panellists for a Career Talk Forum at The Malay College Kuala Kangsar, Perak (MCKK).

The programmes were aimed at providing students with information on different career options and to inspire them to set achievable goals for their future. Dr. Rosmadi shared his personal knowledge, experience, and ideas in the field of Geography and his experience in doing a research in the Antarctic.

In the sharing session, Dr. Rosmadi shared the nature and scope of geographical research and educated students on the necessary skills needed in this field. Later, for the Career Talk Forum, he spoke about his career in academia and his academic and professional experiences have benefited communities in his area of study.

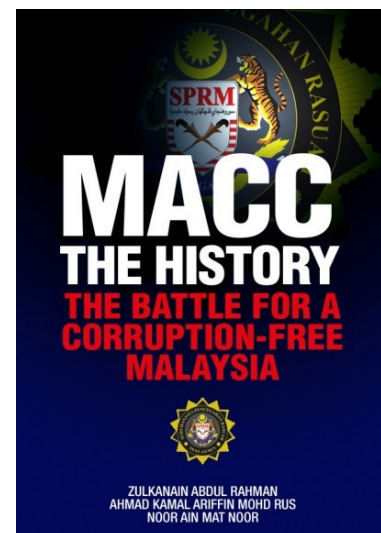
“Women, Peace and Security Agenda”



On 29 September 2020, the Department of International and Strategic Studies received a visit by the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Belgium in Malaysia, H.E. Mr. Pascal Grégoire, and discussed on the topic of, “Women, Peace and Security Agenda”.

MACC on the battle of corruptions

This publication offers a translation of the original 2017 version on the battle of the Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (Suruhanjaya Pencegah Rasuah Malaysia). The book is a collaborative effort between Dr Zulkanain and Dr Ahmad Kamal of the History Department and Dr Noor Ain from CITRA. Books are currently available physically and online from UMPRESS.



WE WISH A HAPPY RETIREMENT TO

Associate Professor Dr Krishanan Maniam

HEAD OF THE INDIAN STUDIES DEPARTMENT



We are saddened by the retirement of Associate Professor Dr Krishanan Maniam, Head of Indian Studies Department on 27 October 2020. Dr Krishanan spent a total of 40 years with the University of Malaya. He first came to the university as an undergraduate at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences in 1981. He chose to read Indian Studies. Upon graduation in 1984, he enrolled in the Diploma of Education Programme and qualified as a teacher. In the same year, he was offered a tutorship position at the Indian Studies Department. From there he enrolled for his MA in the same department. Dr Krishanan later obtained his PhD from the University of Madras in 1997. He was first appointed a lecturer at the Indian Studies Programme in 1990, and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2002. He was appointed Head of Department on three occasions. Dr

Krishanan was also a certified quality lead auditor at the University, and went on to serve as Training Section Manager for UM's Quality Management and Enhancement Centre (QMEC) from 2006-2008 and a long-time head of internal audit at the Faculty. Between June 2014 and July 2016, AP Krishanan was seconded to the Prime Minister Department to serve as the Chief Coordinator for the Special Implementation Task Force for the Cabinet Committee for Indian Community. His last appointment was Head of Indian Studies Department, which he held from June 2008 until his retirement.

**WE WOULD LIKE TO WISH DR. KRISHANAN
A VERY HAPPY RETIREMENT AND
ALL THE BEST FOR THE FUTURE**