



UNIVERSITI
MALAYA

@ FASS PULSE

e-Bulletin for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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Visit from the Vice-Chancellor UM



YBhg. Prof. Dato' Ir. Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor with management team and Head of Departments

YBhg. Prof. Dato' Ir. Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor, the newly appointed Vice-Chancellor to UM, visited FASS on the 2nd of February 2021 in order to interact and get acquainted with the developments and challenges of the Faculty. The visit was received by the Dean, Prof. Datuk Dr. Danny and the respective Heads of Department, along with the FASS management team.

During the visit, the VC was briefed on the achievements and development prospects of the Faculty. The VC, in his remarks, accentuated the new strategic plan will position Universiti Malaya as a leader in providing seamless, full-spectrum education pathways and give unparalleled reputation for engagement and inclusivity.

He also reminded the Faculty to deliver significant outcomes and social-economic dividends for the University, nations, and society where possible. He challenged members of the faculty to respond to new and emerging academic opportunities and challenges by

“...the needs of instituting the Open Distance learning (ODL), Microcredentials, and Remote Learning as part of the roadmap to the future, providing direction, motivation, and purpose...”

being bold and daring to be different, distinguishing ourselves by success on our own terms.

Lastly, he spoke about the need to institute Open Distance learning (ODL), Microcredentials, and Remote Learning as part of the roadmap to the future, and offered direction, motivation, and purpose to becoming a world-renowned University. He ended his session by asking everyone to play a role in this strategic plan in ensuring UM as an autonomous, most accessible, supportive, and engaged University.



YBhg. Prof. Dato' Ir. Dr. Mohd Hamdi Abd Shukor presenting the roadmap to the future to the FASS.

Disclaimer: This e-newsletter is an essential communication link between the FASS, UM and the wider community. It is imperative that the newsletter is accurate, informative and contain information that will mutually benefit both Faculty and community members.

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Disability Not a Barrier for a Doctorate

On 26th January 2021, the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences held a viva voce for Anthony Alexander Ching Vee Yee, a PhD candidate who is both deaf and mute. This would be the first time that the FASS or the entire UM, has ever held a viva voce for such a candidate.

Throughout the two-hour examination, the PhD candidate from the Department of Anthropology and Sociology successfully defended his thesis titled "The Construction of Deaf People's Identities through Intersectionality in Malaysian Mainstream Society". The presentation was conducted in sign language and was verbalised by Mrs Lucy Lim Yoke Kwan and Mr Muhammad Firdaus Abu Hassan from the Disability Management Services, Universiti Malaya.

Anthony is expected to attend his convocation ceremony in 2021. The Faculty would like to congratulate him on completing the PhD programme, as well as his supervisor, Dr. Rosila Bee Mohd Hussain, for her unwavering guidance. FASS will continue to welcome students from all walks of life to pursue research they are passionate in and remains committed in providing the best service and guidance in the field of academia.



Anthony (middle) with the examination committee after successfully defending his thesis



Anthony presenting through sign language as translated by Mrs Lucy

Postcoloniality and Transnationality in Asia

BY PROF DR SHARMANI GABRIEL

**DEPARTEMEN ILMU SUBASTRA
FAKULTAS ILMU PENGETAHUAN BUDAYA
UNIVERSITAS INDONESIA**

GLOBAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Postcoloniality and Transnationality in Asia

Prof. Melani Budianta
Universitas Indonesia

Yumi Kitamura, Ph.D.
Ehime University

Karl Ian Cheng Choo, Ph.D.
Ateneo de Manila University

Prof. Sharmani Patricia Gabriel
Universiti Malaya

8-SESSION WORKSHOP | FEBRUARY 5TH - MARCH 31ST, 2021

Open for:

- Graduate students of Faculty of Humanities (S2, S3)
- Lecturers and researchers can join as listeners

Program:

- Participants will watch recorded lecture videos and read materials prior to discussion sessions.
- Participants will join the discussion sessions through Zoom as scheduled.
- At the end of the program, participants will write a non-academic text on one of the issues discussed.

Contact: rianimanullang@ui.ac.id

GLOBAL ACADEMIC PROGRAM

Postcoloniality and Transnationality in Asia

- Session 1: Friday, Feb 5th, 2021
Prof. Melani Budianta and Ani Saraswati: **Introductory session**
- Session 2: Friday, Feb 10th, 2021
Prof. Melani Budianta: **Work migration and cultural belonging in Asia**
- Session 3: Friday, Feb 26th, 2021
Karl Ian Cheng Choo, Ph.D.: **Young adult readers and transnational Asia**
- Session 4: Friday, March 5th, 2021
Karl Ian Cheng Choo, Ph.D.: **Gender and sexuality in popular text across borders**
- Session 5: Tuesday, March 10th, 2021
Yumi Kitamura, Ph.D.: **Chinese diasporas across borders**
- Session 6: Friday, March 19th, 2021
Yumi Kitamura, Ph.D.: **Issues related to religious and sexual minorities in Indonesia**
- Session 7: Friday, March 26th, 2021
Prof. Sharmani Patricia Gabriel: **Southeast Asian literature: global and transnational perspectives**
- Session 8: Tuesday, March 31st, 2021
Prof. Sharmani Patricia Gabriel: **Postcolonial construction of national and racial identities**

5 PM JAKARTA TIME

Register here: <http://bit.ly/GAPdepaasfibu>
Contact: rianimanullang@ui.ac.id

The Department of English of FASS, Universiti Malaya, along with Kyoto University, Japan and Ateneo de Manila University, the Philippines, is collaborating with Universitas Indonesia in offering a series of eight workshops under the Global Academic Programme on "Postcoloniality and Transnationality in Asia" from 5 February to 31 March 2021.

The programme aims to expose postgraduate students and junior faculty to cutting edge scholarship, theories, and approaches to the study of transnational flows and the cultural reproduction of identities in the region. Participants are required to do readings, watch lecture videos, and participate in seminar discussions. Further details can be found in the workshop flyer above:

SHAPE-SEA launches ‘Elevating Critical Voices on the State of Human Rights and Peace in the time of Covid-19’

BY DR KHOO YING HOOI

Edited by Joel Mark Barredo, Dr Khoo Ying Hooi, and Dr Herlambang P. Wiratraman, the book, “Southeast Asia, Infected and Interrupted: Elevating Critical Voices on the State of Human Rights and Peace in the Time of Covid-19” features a total of 72 articles on topics covering all Southeast Asian countries. Its publication was initiated by the Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research in ASEAN/Southeast Asia Programme (SHAPE-SEA) in its pursuit of increased knowledge on human rights and peace and to promote academic-activism.

This project is one of the earliest initiatives by an organisation to open its doors to anyone living in or concerned about the situation in Southeast Asia to write rapid assessments about the impacts of COVID-19 on any human rights and peace issues. The pieces in this edited book were selected from more than 100 articles featured in that digital project. This project did not only allow for knowledge building from the ground, but also facilitated the growth of a community of knowledge frontliners. The 72 articles in this book represent voices from all 11 Southeast Asian countries and address issues related to politics and democracy, gender and sexuality, vulnerable groups, technology and information, and public health and wellbeing



On 4 February 2021, in light of SHAPE-SEA's sixth-anniversary theme of "Shaping a Better Normal", an edited collection of selected think pieces entitled "Southeast Asia: Infected and Interrupted: Elevating Critical Voices on the State of Human Rights and Peace in the Time of COVID-19", was launched.



Alternative Solutions in Facing Covid-19 as a Systemic Crisis – A Dialogue Across Southeast Asia

BY DR KHOO YING HOOI

Co-organised by Fiskom, Universitas Kristen Satya Wacana (Salatiga, Indonesia), SEA-Junction (Bangkok, Thailand) and Centre Asie du Sud-Est (Paris, France), this event gathered social science researchers including Dr Khoo Ying Hooi from the Department of International and Strategic Studies to contemplate alternative solutions for Southeast Asia through study cases in Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

An Interfaith Dialogue on “Breaking Hate: Building Social Cohesion in a Divided Malaysia”

BY DR LAI SUAT YAN



The increased divisiveness in the Malaysian society amidst Covid-19 spurred the Chevening Alumni Malaysia (CAM) to organize a virtual forum to unpack this phenomenon and the roadmap to build social cohesion. Dr Lai Suat Yan, Coordinator and Senior Lecturer of Gender Studies Program, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, was one of the three panelists. Her expertise includes the intersection of religious study and gender studies.

The other two panelists for the forum attended by around 100 audience members via Facebook on 11 January 2021 were YB Dato Seri Dr Mujahid Yusof Rawa, former Minister in the Prime Ministers's Department and Parit Buntar Member of Parliament, and Reverend Dr Hermen Shastri, General Secretary, Council of Churches Malaysia.

Responding to the question of the practical steps to build social cohesion in Malaysia, Dr Lai Suat Yan delineated a two-pronged approach. Firstly, she highlighted the significance of building understanding that we as citizens of Malaysia could exemplify by befriending and reaching out to those of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

Specifically, she drew attention to Dr Rokiah Talib, a former Professor at University Malaya, who went out of her way to shop for groceries for her Chinese elderly neighbour during this Covid-19 pandemic. For Dr Lai

personally, the pandemic has afforded the opportunity to build friendships with her condominium neighbours including those of different ethnic and faith traditions as she has been spending more time working from home and exercising within its compounds.

Secondly, on another level, she emphasized the importance of standing in solidarity with those who are different from us or facing discrimination or being oppressed. For example, she drew attention to a Buddhist who stood in solidarity and protected her Muslim minority neighbours who were persecuted by extremist Buddhists in Myanmar. At the home front, she highlighted the act of solidarity of Sisters in Islam with those of the Christian faith a few years ago.

Pertaining to the possibility of a polity organized beyond religion or racial inclinations, Dr Lai Suat Yan pointed out that if we do not start or prepare the ground work, Malaysia will never be ready for it. While such a path is rocky, she noted that efforts have been initiated, including by CAM itself in organizing the present interfaith forum. She also noted the campaign by social activists and civil societies in the 10th general election in 1999 to elect their Members of Parliament based on issues rather than along ethnic lines.

She observed that circumstances in favour of such an endeavour include the progressive thinking moderate youths who can deploy their social media savviness to reach a wider public in urban areas, the ability to raise the necessary funds and to find good candidates to run based on such ideals. One of the main challenges is having the machinery to reach out to those in rural and semi-rural areas.

On a lighter note, all the panelists were asked to comment who each of them would like to share the same dinner table with. Dr Lai Suat Yan responded that it would be the late Mother Theresa who went to live and serve the poor in India. Other than that, it would be Dr Noraini Othman, a former Professor at University Kebangsaan Malaysia who intellectually mentored and befriended all irrespective of their ethnic and religious background and Thich Nhat Hanh, a Zen Buddhist monk, known for his interfaith work.

The Future of US-China Relations in the Biden Era and its Impacts on the Middle East

Organised by Asia Middle East Forum, Ankara University, Turkey, this Webinar featured paper presentations on the interactions and intrusions by both China and the United States (US) in the Middle East. For centuries, the Middle East has become the primary focus of US security policy, including its support for Israel, and its stance towards authoritarian governments and its war on terrorism. Meanwhile, China's economy has grown more than six-fold over the past ten years. China became the world's largest energy consumer in 2010, as well as one of the emerging political-economy actors through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects in various parts of the middle East, Asia and Africa.

Middle Eastern governments with oil or gas depend on energy exports to finance their defence and domestic welfare, development, and stability. Those without such resources seek subsidies for the same purposes. Geopolitically, both China and the US have a long history of engagement with the Middle East. While recent precarious turbulence of the region attracts more collusions between both superpowers, the peoples of the Middle East share a desire for freedom from past imperial dominance, present authoritarian controls and for more affirmation of their disparate religious, ethnic, or cultural diversities.

Asia Middle East Forum #AMEF_Webinar_Series

"The Future of US-China Relations in the Biden Era and its Impacts on the Middle East"



Dr. Malek Ayoub Sembal
Journalist, Geopolitical Analyst, Strategic Commentator



Dr. Muhammad Danial Azman
Senior Lecturer, Faculty Arts and Social Sciences, University of Malaya



Muslim Imran
Coordinator for Asia-Pacific, Afro-Asian Council



Moderator: Bader Seyim
Research Assistant in Strategic and International Affairs - UPNM



Adam Bensaid
Investigative Journalist, TRT

Zoom!1E | Date: Tuesday 02-03-2021
Time: 15:00 Turkey time, 14:00 Jerusalem time, 12:00 GMT time

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Financial Assistance Handover Ceremony to the Department Of Social Administration And Justice

BY DR. NORALINA OMAR



The selected 15 student recipients from the Dept. of Social Administration and Justice

On 8th January 2021, The National Islamic Workers Association of Tenaga Nasional Berhad generously provided financial contribution to 15 students of the Department of Social Administration and Justice who come from underprivileged families to ease their burden in facing challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The financial assistance worth RM1000 for each student can be utilized by students to settle the arrears of semester fees or to meet attendant needs of online learning. The assistance was delivered by Dato Ir. Abdul Aziz Bin Abdul Majid, Vice President of TNB National Islamic Workers Association, while the faculty was represented by the dean, Professor Datuk Dr Danny Wong Tze Ken.

The ceremony was also attended by a few representatives from the National Islamic Workers Association and staff of the Department of Social Administration and Justice. The highest appreciation is expressed to the organizing committee who managed to organize the event despite the challenges of complying with the standard operating procedures to safeguard against COVID-19.

Reviewing of the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Harassment Cases in University Malaya

BY DR. LAI SUAT YAN



In line with the agenda of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on the "Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse" (PSEA), the University Malaya (UM) Integrity Office organized a one-day workshop on 9 February 2021 to review the Code of Practice on the Prevention and Handling of Sexual Harassment in UM. Dr Lai Suat Yan, Coordinator and Senior Lecturer of the Gender Studies Program, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences was invited to attend as an expert in the field of gender-based-violence.

She was also there in her capacity as a representative of the University Malaya Academic Staff Association (PKAUM). In addition, she was a member of the committee formed by the government to provide feedback on the proposed standalone Sexual Harassment Act in Malaysia. In reviewing the UM Code of Practice, the recommendations of PKAUM to the proposed amendments by the Integrity Office were discussed.

Key areas include delineating clear procedures for reporting and for the appeal process, clarifying the concept of confidentiality in the investigation process, the rights of the complainants and the accused, and ensuring protection from retaliation for reporting sexual harassment and sexual abuse. Equally important are differentiation in handling sexual harassment as a civil versus a criminal

case and the attendant burden of proof, periodic educational training to raise awareness to incoming students and staff, and training for gender sensitivity in receiving and handling sexual harassment and sexual abuse cases by first responders. There is also the need for monitoring such cases in terms of numbers and reporting them yearly to the campus community. The discussion also highlighted the requirement by certain international funding bodies for the recipient institution to observe the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

For this discussion of the Code of Practice, representatives were invited from various entities within UM, including the Legal Unit, the Psychology and Counselling Section, Administrators and Professional Association (PEKERTI), General Staff Association (PEKERTI), the Student Union and Secretariat of the President of the Residential College. External invited representatives and experts in the field included from persons the Royal Malaysia Police and Ms Emmelia Shariff from Speak Up Malaysia, who is also a member of the committee providing feedback to the proposed Sexual Harassment Act in Malaysia.

The First Ever IRSOC E-Magazine

The IR Society (IRSOC) of the Department of International and Strategic Studies has launched its first e-magazine through a collection of short essays and artworks from the undergraduate and postgraduate students, as well as the IR alumni, in the IR Alumni Society. With a successful first call for contributions, the Magazine is expected to be circulated in April 2021.

BEING A MEDICAL SOCIAL WORKER: My Life Journey

I was the 4th batch to graduate from the Social Justice Department at the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Reflecting on the journey of my career, I am grateful that I made the right choice and have no regrets. Looking back at how it all began, I graduated in 1998 and first worked as a general clerk.

Approximately a year on I became restless and bored and decided to apply for a job at the Public Services Department, as I had wanted to pursue a career in the civil service that fit my university qualifications. I was not very hopeful then as the competition for posts in the civil service was very competitive. Call it luck or fate, to my surprise I was called for an interview two months later in May and by July the same year I was appointed to the civil service and am still faithfully serving there till this day.

I vaguely remember as an undergraduate being told in one of the classes that we may be sent to work in a hospital as a medical social worker (MSW). That statement scared me as I felt very unprepared of the possibility of working in a hospital setting. As a child, I hated hospitals, especially the smell of Hibitane and Lysol. I had always associated those chemical odours with that of a 'sick' environment. I began planning to instead conduct my internship at a hotel with the opposite ambience.

There were 88 students in our class then and I prayed that I would not be picked to intern at a hospital. So much was my dislike and fear for the hospital setting, I researched the number of hospitals there were in the country in attempting to figure the probability of my ending up in one. As luck would have it, on July 1999, I received my first posting to Hospital Tawau in Sabah.

As an arts student who never learnt pure science in school, I was like a naive kindergarten pupil fearful of learning new medical terminology and I had to learn about diseases, diagnoses and the prognoses, treatment modalities from scratch. As if that was not tough enough, I had to undergo the difficult and most excruciating experience of trying to decipher the doctors' handwriting.



**BY NAZRAH BIDIN
HEAD OF MEDICAL SOCIAL WORK DEPARTMENT
MELAKA GENERAL HOSPITAL
SOCIAL JUSTICE DEPARTMENT (1998)**

In the blink of an eye, I have had 22 years of service. Apart from my time at Hospital Tawau, I have had the privilege of also serving at Hospital Sultanah Aminah in Johor Bahru and in the Penang General Hospital, with a promotion offered at every new posting. Although I was quite reluctant to relocate each time as my husband was unable to follow me, we decided that the job was a public service that was important for me and my career. Also, a benefit of being a civil servant was the opportunity to enhance my career through academic pursuits. While posted in Penang, I applied and was offered a scholarship to pursue my master's in social work at Universiti Sains Malaysia. The course was tough, and I had to endure lectures in statistics and conducting research, while still juggling between work and being a wife and mother to four children.

PULSE invites alumni members of FASS to share with us their share of history and the amazing things they have done since graduating. Please send your articles directly to vilasomiah@um.edu.my (Dr. Vilashini Somiah, Ed-in-Chief) or nadhawah@um.edu.my (Ms. Nadhwah Tul Iman Mizam, Asst. Ed-in-Chief). We are also open to receiving donations and any feedback, suggestions and questions as well.

Reflecting on my career, I have enjoyed my illustrious career as a medical social worker. The work is never easy; apart from the difficult medical terminology to learn, medical social workers must develop soft skills especially in the art of communication. A medical social worker must face the daily challenge of meeting the expectations of severely ill and terminally ill patients who are poor or homeless. There are also patients who are jobless, poor and impoverished and are mentally and physically affected by their circumstances. Also, prolonged treatment can be harsh on both the patients and their families.

And so, medical social workers must have the ability to understand the patient's environment and their family

“..like the saying “perseverance and hard work pays”, slowly but surely I became an expert reading what was documented and in turn it facilitated my work.”

dynamics, in order to help them back to independence. It can also be emotionally nerve-racking for workers like us when financial aid, equipment and food are limited. One of the hardest things I have had to do is turn patients away because the funding for the year has been exhausted. Depending on government funding alone is not sufficient as such finite resources can never meet the infinite medical demands. And so, a crucial part of the job is having to identify potential donors to complement government funding through networking. The physical and emotional demands of working with hospital patients has never got the better of me. As an alumna of the Social Justice Department, I am proud to say that I have never regretted, nor have I lost the passion of, serving as a medical social worker. The value of seeing a patient you have assisted smile and recover is worth more than its weight in gold.



We also do our community work to give assistance for patients who are bed ridden at home



With my mentor Prof Dr Siti Hajar Abu Bakar



One of the programs to help the department of paediatric from Petronas for setting up a mini library and help the poor patients specifically for paediatric wards

Reviving Indian Studies: Like old wine in a new bottle

BY DR MOHANA DASS RAMASAMY
DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN STUDIES



Dr. Mohana (second from the right) with fellow colleagues

The world has experienced the largest disruption to education in the history of our living time. It has provided us with shortened teaching time, unpleasant ways of knowledge delivery, and irregular ways of establishing communication, among other things. But despite so the many negative repercussions of the pandemic, the year 2020 must be acknowledged as a milestone year for the Department of Indian Studies (DIS), a department that could be branded as 'old wine' because of its more traditional academic ways.

2020 witnessed the signing of two Memorandums of Agreement associating the department with public fund-providers, thereby marking its readiness to play an effective role as one of the most significant academic centers emphasizing Indians and Indianness in Malaysia. The development trajectory is an uphill task as it demands extraordinary commitment and proactive action from its stakeholders. Soul-searching during this pandemic era, especially by reassessing the academic progress and the strengths of the department, allowed me to accept the fact that there are a few short-term and long-term issues that must be attended to with due attention.

When I joined the department as an undergraduate in 1992, I never thought that the department would become my second home. My connection with the DIS was an accident that worked out for both the department and me. Initially, I selected courses from the Malay Studies, History and Geography Departments, but following the advice given by a senior lecturer from Indian Studies, I attached myself with the department. I enjoyed a considerable period of time incubating among the legends who nurtured the department in the late 1990s. I was attracted to the department's academic endeavors and versatile ideas, which shaped my worldview as a young tutor back then. This opened up a new spectrum of academic lifestyle for me that helped me see the value of the department.

But today, with Covid-19, the old way of academic life is disturbed, changing the way the department operates, and students' engagement with the field. The pandemic took away our podium and access to students, and brought with it loneliness. Transitioning to online platforms halted the DIS' curriculum review exercise and the Master's programme planning, on top of other social engagements that we often host.

Personally speaking, I miss face-to-face teaching, with my students' lively chatter, which has now disappeared due to unstable internet connections. Language and literature courses are aesthetic in nature, designed to be appreciated as a group, and interpersonally, in relishing the essences and elegance of literature. DIS often celebrates this through welcome and farewell ceremonies, Deepavali celebrations and career days. DIS relies on these extra-curricular activities to keep the department alive.

“The 2020 has witnessed signing of two Memorandum of Agreement associating the department with public fund-providers,... to play an effective role as one of the significant academic centers emphasizing on Indians and Indianness in Malaysia.”

These ante-norms of the varsity learning atmosphere has created a 'lost year' for students, with first year students, particularly, struggling with this new hybrid culture. We at DIS, like the rest of our colleagues, felt it is necessary to ensure that they could fit well into this new learning environment at UM, and worked hard for students of the community to balance their knowledge and connection to the university.

No doubt, many in the department learned to be tech-savvy very quickly from the moment we began online teaching. Colleagues at the FASS were quick to adapt to the constantly changing and evolving teaching and learning environment we were presented with. For us who teach Tamil Language and Literature, certain fundamentals to the field required us to pay close attention to students online, as most of our graduates were dependent on our methodology and tended to join the teaching profession later.

The sore milieu faced by the department is that it has been in continuous development of our curriculum since the early 2000s. Since then there have been three review exercises, designing courses with a strong emphasis on soft-skills, and paying close attention to the needs of our students in their preferred industries. We must ask how DIS can diversify in the teaching of Tamil language and Literature and now make it IR4.0 compatible. Another area that needs to be addressed in the recent shift towards goal-centred education is that of the development of essential life skills, such as collaborative learning, peer assessment and self-assessment, as stipulated in target 4.7 of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). All soft skills and life skills are usually embedded within course designs and DIS must realign its focus from theoretical and content-based knowledge to practice based content to help the advancement of students in the information and communication era, which has become especially important today.

But we must remember that the teaching of Tamil Language and Literature is not merely a language-based course. Tamil literature is the compendium of writings that offers a detailed outlook of the people and their history, lifestyle, philosophy, management, challenges, solutions, communication and philosophy. There is so much room for expansion, for instance, the study of Indians in Malaysia is an area of study that has been neglected for a long period. DIS's focus on Tamil Language and Literature needs certainly has room to grow especially with two newly-established endowments offered to the department, a sign of the public's support in new growth.

Hopefully, with the new Research Centre for Indians scholars from DIS can now explore and document newer issues about the Indians and Indianness in Malaysia. While it sounds like DIS is faced with an uphill climb, there is certainly still a ray of hope. The department is determined to work through the pandemic even if it is difficult; as a smaller department, we believe the answer is in instilling changes in the trajectory of education, and changing the way we approach our field.

In the past, the DIS has proven its importance and significance as an academic hub in the nation by being the sole proprietor in safeguarding Tamil Language and Literature, as well as for the Indians and Indianness in Malaysia. Despite Covid19, we at DIS must continue to do right by our students and the community we represent by upgrading our curriculum compositions, by covering larger and newer research areas and learning to be flexible in absorbing the IR4.0 era education which demands us to be more technologically inclined. These are areas that need serious consideration for Indian Studies to stay relevant in the market, as not all old wine ages well.

“These ante-norms of varsity learning atmosphere has created a 'lost year' for students, with first year students, particularly, struggling with this new hybrid culture.”



The First International Conference on Siddha Medicine and Indian Civilization held in UM in 2018



Dr Mohana with the rest of the Department of Indian Studies' lecturers and staff with Dr. Zulkanain (middle second row)

POSTGRADUATE HIGHLIGHTS: HIDAYAT ULLAH KHAN

PAKISTAN
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY CANDIDATE
(EAST ASIAN STUDIES)



1. How did you choose FASS as the desired place of study?

I received a national scholarship for my Postgraduate studies in 2018. I reached out to some friends and shared my research ideas with scholars in different universities and different countries including Malaysia. I later applied to the Australian National University and the University of Malaya and was accepted into both, but I preferred the University of Malaya because of its ranking which is the outcome of the research potential of this institution. Moreover, it was the expertise of the faculty members of the Department of East Asian Studies that fascinated me. As my area of research is the foreign policy of China, the department of East Asian Studies provides a very good platform to equip oneself with China studies. This strength of the department is boosted by the dedication of its academic staff. My supervisors, Associate Professor Dr Nasrudin Akhir and Dr Geetha Govindasamy, are known for their expertise and great understanding of the subject and have been my pillars of strength.

2. We would like to know more about your PhD research. How would you summarize your work?

I am working on the foreign policy of China. More specifically, my research is on the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In the 21st century, the BRI is the only mega initiative of its nature. BRI is a much-debated subject among the scholars and policy makers these days. The subject is mainly interpreted from a geopolitical perspective in available literature. In my work, I am employing the political economy approach. The study is carried out through qualitative methods wherein unstructured interviews are conducted with academicians, politicians and think tanks. I argue that the primary drivers of the BRI are domestic political-economic issues. This point contrasts with the narrative in existing literature wherein geopolitics is considered as a main driver behind the initiative. So, in my study, I argue that geopolitics is a consequence and not a main driver of BRI.

The PhD research is a very challenging task. In my work, the primary challenge I faced was in accessing information related to BRI. The information related to this subject matter is limited to very few people and it was a very challenging task to get access to it. When I was already facing the

problem of getting more accurate data, COVID-19 added new difficulties in that the travel restrictions halted many of my scheduled personal interviews. Although it is a difficult journey, but it continues to be a great learning experience.

3. What is interesting about the area?

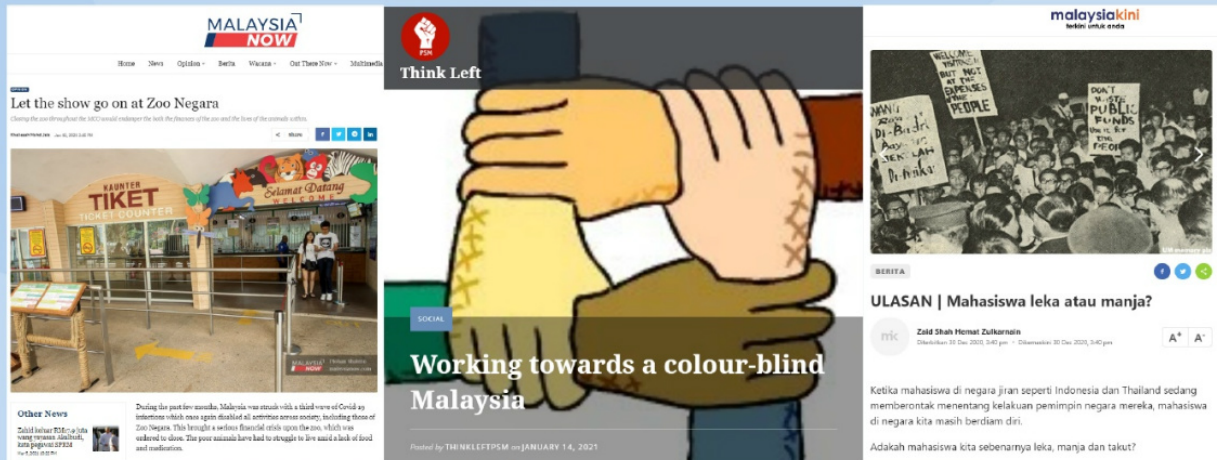
Among BRI's six economic corridors, one is aimed at connecting Western Xinjiang province of China with Gwadar port in Southern Pakistan via the "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC). What is interesting here is that the Gwadar port is in Baluchistan province of Pakistan, the province I come from. So being a Pakistani national, a resident of province Baluchistan and a student of politics and international relations, I felt that this economic engagement between China and Pakistan needs to be explored. The CPEC is a project worth 62 billion US Dollars. This is a huge amount of investment mainly allocated to four major sectors such as Energy, Infrastructure building, transport (Railway) and Gwadar port. It is commonly believed that the Chinese investment in Pakistan will help to build much-needed infrastructure, create jobs, overcome energy crises and bring economic prosperity, but at what cost for Pakistan? Given Pakistan's weak economic performance, there are certain questions related to this engagement. So, the study is an attempt to explore whether this is really a win-win situation, or just a win for China. The study, therefore, would provide a research-based insight to policy makers in Pakistan.

4. What has been the highlight of your PhD journey so far?

I have learnt and am learning a lot of new things and gaining new experiences. This journey has changed my understanding about global politics. The academic environment in UM is great, with regular seminars and conferences which provide a good opportunity for students from different regions and cultures to interact and share ideas with each other. The element of cultural diversity in UM is a great source of learning new things.

CHALLENGES OF MEDIA STUDENTS

BY SITI NUR KHALISAH



Some of the articles published by the students in various platforms

The 2nd-year students from Department of Media and Communication Studies at University Malaya have been given a task in the AIM2009 Selected Current Issues class. With guidance from Dr Md Azalanshah Md Syed, students learn how to write a good article depending on its type. Students have to choose whether to write an Op-ed, an editorial, or a column article. These articles have the same purpose which is to inform and educate readers from the student's point of view. The main task for students is to publish their article in the form of an opinion essay and letter to the editor.

Students had to find suitable issues that come from different themes under politics, environment, and community. Finding topics and issues was not a challenge until students had to publish the article at any online news portal. Students had to make sure that their article will meet the news portal's requirements for it to be published by the editors. A total of 15 students managed to get their articles published.

These articles covered the importance of a child's decision, student sensitivity to state problems and debt crises, the drug problem, racism, and victim blaming. Students also wrote about Macau scammers which society needs to be aware of. They also highlighted serious issues which arose during the pandemic, such as that of water pollution in Selangor and animal care in Zoo Negara, as well as the importance of following the government's SOPs to break the Covid-19 chain. Other than that, there were politically-themed articles covering the issue that UMNO is facing in the current government, the worth of MySalam, and the questionable freedom of

media press in Malaysia. The hope of the department is that these articles will educate and make people aware of the current issues that are happening in our country.

Below are the links to the published articles:

- <https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/557032>
- <https://www.freemalysiatoday.com/category/bahasa/pandangan/2020/12/29/biarlah-umno-sokong-anwar-daripada-terus-dibuli-oleh-rakan-sekutu/>
- <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/292199>
- <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/291363>
- <https://m.malaysiakini.com/letters/557337>
- <https://m.malaysiakini.com/letters/557065>
- <https://www.nst.com.my/opinion/letters/2020/12/647827/malaysians-beware-stranger-danger>
- <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/s/294199>
- <https://www.malaysianow.com/wacana/2021/01/05/siap-akah-yang-menentukan-hala-tuju-kehidupan-kita/>
- <https://www.google.com/amp/s/malaysiagazette.com/2021/01/08/sudah-masanya-isu-perkauman-dihentikan/%3famp>
- <https://www.malaysianow.com/wacana/2021/01/11/krisis-pinjaman-pendidikan-dalam-kalangan-graduan-malaysia/>
- <https://thinkleft.net/2021/01/14/working-towards-a-colour-blind-malaysia/>
- https://malaysiagazette.com/2021/01/05/kenapa-dadah-masih-kebal-hingga-sekarang/?fbclid=IwAR3p6OIkGuHjCEjNFrQ2KIBuMFTxd1yZVGpacg7qXcgGrI_UZJUMYB4XU
- <https://www.malaysianow.com/opinion/2021/01/18/let-the-show-go-on-at-zoo-negara/>
- <https://www.themalaysianinsight.com/bahasa/s/295998>

ASIAN UNIVERSITY VIRTUAL FRIENDSHIP GAMES: A CHANCE TO SHINE

BY QISTINA NADIA DZULQARNAIN



Nur Dini Husna, the Champion in the Spoken Poetry category.

On the 30th of January 2021, the first-ever Asian University Virtual Friendship Games (AUniVFG) was hosted by the University of Immaculate Conception, Philippines (UIC). Under the theme of "Journeying Together to Foster Camaraderie Among Students in Building a Resilient Higher Education Institution through Friendly Virtual Competitions", the AUniVFG is dedicated to creating long-lasting bonds between participants from various universities across the globe.

The games were divided into categories such as E-Literary, E-Games, and E-Cool-Tural, with students from universities all over Asia participating. Indonesian students from Universitas Katolik Santo Thomas, Universitas Lambung Mangkurat, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, and Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University represented their nation while those from Fu Jen Catholic University and National Quemoy University competed as delegates from Taiwan. Furthermore, eager students from the University of Saint Joseph from Macau, Catholic University of Korea, and the hosting university displayed their talents as well.

Alongside the three students sent by Universiti Malaya (UM), numerous students from other Malaysian universities such as Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), and the Management and Science University (MSU) also participated in this international event.

By the end of the event, Mohd Ikmal Safwan, a third-year English Literature student from FASS became the winner

of the Mr. Ambassador title which came as a complete surprise to him. "At first, I was only interested in joining the Spoken Word competition under the E-Literary category with my friends but Mr Hilmi, our administrative officer at the faculty nominated and encouraged me to compete in the Ambassador of Goodwill category. I had my doubts about competing, but my friends also motivated me to challenge myself and I decided to give it my best shot", he explained. As the only candidate from UM competing for the title, Safwan described how questions posed as "tough but well-thought out" with topics covering issues of psychology, youth leadership, and self-integration.

According to Safwan, the question about Asia in general was the toughest as it required contestants to craft a message for an Asian organisation. "My answer highlighted how poverty is a major problem in Asia. Our attention is often focused on popular urban areas, which causes secluded rural areas to be ignored. Due to them having little visibility, sponsorships and government funding are hard to attain. I believe that by increasing their visibility, we can tackle the issue on a national and international level", he elaborated.

Nur Dini Husna Yusnaidi, a third-year student also from the Department of English, was another winner, when she bagged first place E-Literary Spoken Word category, outshining hundreds of other competitors with her emotional poem. Dini described the piece (which she wrote in one night) as being about loss, and how she believed that "everyone has experienced the loss of someone they love before, and so a sense of familiarity is

evoked in those listening to my poem". Dini's untitled piece was divided into two parts: the first part tells listeners about a person who has lost her love life due to her own insensibility and the latter part is about someone recalling memories of their mother who has passed away.

The participants (myself included) had no expectations of winning, and joined only for the sake of experience and fun. Nonetheless, the wins have become our collective triumph and we are proud to be able to represent the department and university at an international level. Hopefully, more events like the AUniVFG will be organised in the future so that others can partake to broaden their minds and spread positivity during these increasingly trying times we face nowadays.

Congratulations again to both winners.

Left:
Ikmal Safwan as the
Mr. Ambassador of Goodwill 2021.

Q: If you will be given the chance to deliver a speech to an Asian organization, what is your message to them?

”I think the problem that we face here in Asia which is like widely connected to all of us is how poverty is such a big issue, that it is often, even though it is highlighted but it's also being ignored. Like the poverty that is being highlighted is usually on the popular [urban] basis, but it's secluded rural basis is always being ignored, right? So places like that often doesn't receive any government fund or like any sponsorship. But I believe that by highlighting those issues, we can actually create like a wider reach for topics to talk about in the Asian region”

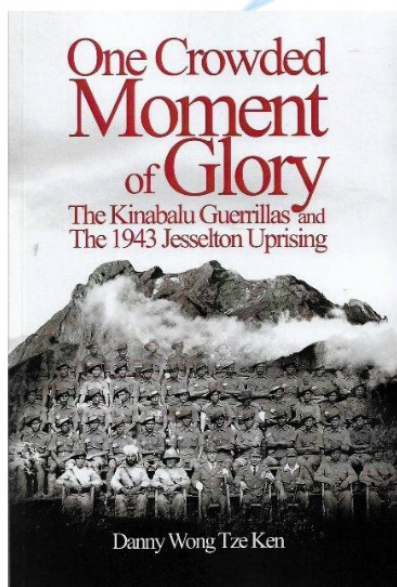
UNIVERSITI MALAYA
University of Malaya
Mr. Ambassador of Goodwill 2021

@usgofuic | /usgofuic

AWARD-WINNING BOOKS

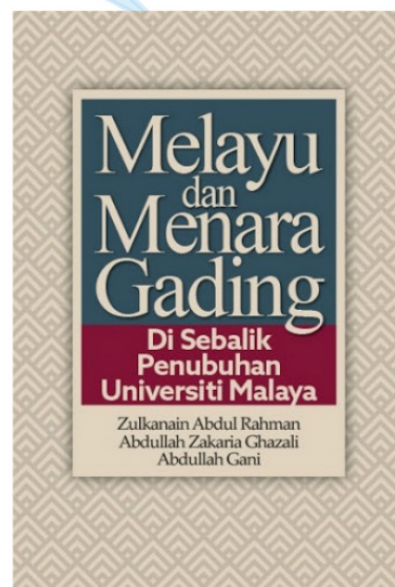
“One Crowded Moment of Glory: The Kinabalu Guerrillas and The 1943 Jesselton Uprising” by Datuk Prof. Dr. Danny Wong Tze Ken

MAPIM-KPM Award
Best Scientific Book Award
Social Sciences and Humanities



“Melayu dan Menara Gading: Di Sebalik Penubuhan Universiti Malaya” by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zulkanain Abdul Rahman, Prof. Emeritus Datuk Dr. Abdullah Zakaria Ghazali, Prof. Dr. Abdullah Gani

MAPIM-KPM Award
Scientific Book Award
Best General



New changes in the Dean's Office



**WE WISH A
HAPPY RETIREMENT TO
MDM. NOR ISHAH ARIFFIN**

We would like to thank Madam Nor Ishah Ariffin for her 35 years of service to the University of Malaya as Administrative Assistant in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences.

We sincerely wish you all the best in your future endeavors.

We would also like to thank our previous Principal Senior Assistant Registrar, Mr. Md Khir Mohd Khir, for his hard work and dedication to the Faculty. We wish him all the best in his new position.



Mr Khir (seating second from the left) with some of the Dean's Office staff



Mr Md Khir Mohd Yunus
Senior Principal Assistant Registrar
Organizational Development and
Governance Division in Registrar Department

The Faculty would like to welcome



Mdm Che Mazni Sidek
Principal Assistant Registrar
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

CONGRATULATIONS

New Heads of Departments



DR. MASHITAH BINTI HAMIDI

Head of Department
Social Administration and Justice



MR. LOOI SIEW TEIP

Head of Department
English



We would like to thank
Associate Prof. Dr. Haris Bin Abd Wahab (Social Administration and Justice) and
Associate Prof. Dr. Mary Susan Philip (English)
for their hard work and dedication as the previous Heads of Departments.



FASS also congratulates the following faculty members on their reappointments:

Dr. Mala A/P Rajoo @ Santhian as the Head of Department of the Southeast Asian Studies.



Associate Professor Dr. Zulkanain Abdul Rahman as the Head of Department of History.





**Professor Dr. Siti Hajar
Abu Bakar AH**

Deputy Dean (Higher Degree)
until 31 December 2021

Associate Professor Dr. Hanafi Hussin from the Dept of Southeast Asian Studies for his re-appointment as the Head of the Malaysian Population and Migration Research Centre (MPMRC) from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2022.



Dr. Welyne Jeffrey Jehom from the Dept of Anthropology and Sociology for her re-appointment as the Head of Research of Centre for Malaysian Indigenous Studies (CMIS) from 4 January to 30 June 2021.



Welcome to FASS

Dr. Mumtaz Aini binti Alivi

Senior Lecturer, Department of Media and Communication Studies



Education:

- PhD Mass Communication, Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)
- M.A .Corporate Communcation, UPM
- B.A. Major I: Language and Malay Linguistics, Major II: Journalism, UPM
- Dip. Secretarial Science, Politeknik Sultan Haji Ahmad Shah

Experience:

- More than 21 years in journalism and television news coverage
- Best Broadcast Journalist in 2001 for national level
- Broadcast Journalist
- Newscaster
- News Editor
- News Producer
- Assistant Director for Policy and Research Section/Strategic Planning

Field of Specialisation:

Mass Communication / Political Communication / Corporate Communication
Strategic Communication / News / Journalism / Broadcasting / New Media

Dr. Siti Nur Edlyn Nadia Binti Zuraiju

Senior Lecturer
Department of Social Administration and Justice

Education:

- PhD, Universiti Malaya (UM)
- M.A. Public Administration, Universiti Malaya (UM)
- B.A. Administrative Science, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)
- Foundation Law, UiTM

Experience:

- Librarian
- Research Assistant

Field of Specialisation:
Social Management



Dr. Silllalee A/L S. Kandasamy

Senior Lecturer
Department of Indian Studies



Education:

- PhD, Universiti Malaya (UM)
- M.A. Public Administration, Universiti Malaya (UM)
- B.A. Major: Media Studies, Minor: Indian Studies, Universiti Malaya (UM)

Experience:

- Radio announcer
- Producer
- Part-time lecturer
- Assistant Professor

Field of Specialisation:
Tamil Language / Tamil Literature

Contributing to Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

As we enter the 62nd year of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, we remember the faculty as a pioneer institution that has proudly hosted some of the world's most distinguished and influential scholars. Steeped in tradition and history, the faculty has been an institution for great intellectual growth and social capacity building.

As we make it our mission to improve and grow with the times, it is our sincerest hope that the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences will continue to impact and shape Malaysian and international societies in the best way possible. We constantly strive to achieve excellence for all our students and researchers; therefore, we seek generous contributions from alumni and friends to improve the learning experience of our students, including renewing some of our existing facilities.

We truly value the assistance of all our friends who have come forward to support us, both as individuals and organizations, with their generous donations.

We are very pleased to say that many of them are former students of FASS. We would like to thank them for reaching out and giving back to their alma mater.

Contributions made will go to various efforts planned the faculty for 2021/2022:

- Comprehensive student support for students in-need
- Tabung Kecemerlangan FSSS (Alumni & Industry)
- Construction of Dataran Sastera II for the use of faculty members and students
- FASS Research and Resource Centre
- The establishment of new programmes in the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
- Upgrading of facilities

Contributions can be made through:

1. Cash/Cheque (Cheque is to be made out in the name of BENDAHARI UNIVERSITI MALAYA)
2. Bank Draft (Ref. No _____)
3. Depository to Universiti Malaya Account (CIMB 8001279998)
4. Online payment:
(<https://epay.um.edu.my/payment/pay/752>)
For your convenience, scan the QR Code below:



Upon payment, please kindly submit the transaction receipt to sastera@um.edu.my for our further record.

Should you have any further enquiries, please do not hesitate to contact:

Madam Che Mazni Sidek: 03-79675525

mazni_sidek@um.edu.my

Ms Nor Farah Hanim Amzah: 03-79675454/5527

hanim_amzah@um.edu.my