Message from the Director of the Academy of Brunei

Alhamdulillah, Thanks to Allah S.W.T for this first publication of APB Kitani: Newsletter of the Academy of Brunei Studies. I am pleased to welcome readers to this first issue and hope that it will help you get to know us better as we share our news and activities.

We plan to publish this newsletter once a year as a platform for both academic staff and students to inform readers of the Academy’s various activities. This seminal issue further serves to introduce the Academy and its staff to readers. Lastly, I wish to thank the editor for his work in producing this newsletter and to others who have made contributions.
Universiti Brunei Darussalam

VISION
‘An academic centre of excellence that leads the world in the creation and dissemination of knowledge relating to all aspects of life in Brunei Darussalam’

MISSION
‘To achieve a global reputation as an academic centre of excellence in Brunei Studies’

Today, the Academy has a growing community of local and international graduate students studying for MA by Research and PhD degrees on a diverse range of topics that include comparative and multi-country studies.

Undergraduates have a wide-range of modules to choose from that reflects the Academy’s multi-disciplinary nature and its approach to the study of Brunei. These modules cover the following topics: Languages, Literature (traditional and modern), History, Technology Studies (traditional and modern), Material Culture, Politics, Education, International Relations, Geography, Fisheries, Malay Islamic Monarchy, Economics, Material Culture, Islam and Sociocultural Studies.

Introducing

The Academy of Brunei Studies
Universiti Brunei Darussalam

The Academy of Brunei Studies was established in 1990 as a multidisciplinary centre of study and research covering all aspects of life in Brunei Darussalam. Undergraduate programmes in Brunei Studies were first offered in 1996, graduate degrees followed in 2004. Today, the Academy offers Bachelor of Arts in Brunei Studies, MA by Research and PhD degrees.

Although one of the smallest of UBD’s faculties, the Academy is also one of the most vibrant and dynamic, providing a lively, informed academic environment in which graduate and undergraduate students are able to thrive. All staff are experts in their subject areas and adopt a cross-disciplinary approach to teaching and research. They also place great emphasis on making the Academy a stimu-
Seminar on Social Issue

In January 2015, the Academy of Brunei Studies in collaboration with MTMIB (Majlis Tertinggi Melayu Islam Beraja – Supreme Council of the Malay Islamic Monarch) organized a seminar on social issues. The objective of the seminar was to provide a platform for discussion on various social issues Brunei currently experiences, identify the causes and discuss ways to address and overcome social problems. Holding the seminar was a response to His Majesty Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Mu’izzaddin Waddaulah’s titah (decree) to inculcate MIB values among Brunei youth as a means of countering the negative aspects of globalization.

On the 18 February the Academy held a meeting with the institution’s stakeholders, who comprised of 20 representatives from the government and private sector. The meeting aimed to enhance closer ties between Academy staff and those considered as partners, particularly through constructive dialogue in regard to stakeholder recruitment needs and criteria.

Then Deputy Director of the Academy, Mohd Shahrol Amira, briefed stakeholders on the undergraduate and graduate degrees and explained the importance of the Discovery Year Programme in developing and preparing students for the work place. This was followed by a lengthy question and answer session and discussions between staff and stakeholders on future needs within the context of Wawasan Brunei 2035 (Brunei Vision 2035).

Most stakeholders reported a high level of satisfaction with their staff recruited from the Academy. Temporary placements for Academy students as part of their Discovery Year were also discussed in detail.
Visit by Rajamangala University of Technology, Thailand

As part of a tour of outstanding universities in Southeast Asia, 35 senior executives and key personnel from Rajamangala University of Technology, Bangkok, Thailand, visited Universiti Brunei Darussalam where they were hosted by the Academy of Brunei Studies. The Rajamangala University contingent were keen to learn about the Academy’s research and teaching, particularly in relation to Brunei literature, material culture, Islam and sociocultural studies. Another aim of their visit was to broaden their knowledge, experience of Brunei, and gain insights into the Sultanate’s culture, traditions and the lives of its people.

Several of the Academy’s staff gave presentations during the meeting, which began with an overview of the Academy and Universiti Brunei Darussalam by the Director. Following was a talk on Brunei’s national philosophy (Malay Islamic Monarchy) and culture by Haji Mohd Ratee, a presentation on graduate studies and research by Stephen Druce, and a detailed overview on the undergraduate programme and the GenNEXT degree by Pg. Khairul Rijal. A lively discussion followed and the two institutions discussed future collaboration in research, student exchange programmes and possible academic staff exchange.

Academy Director calls for more philological studies on Brunei manuscript

During a workshop held in September at the Borneo Research Centre, Academy Director, Associate Professor Dr Ampuan Hj Ibrahim Ampuan Hj Tengah, called for more research on Brunei manuscripts, particularly in the field of philology. The Director informed the audience that Universiti Brunei Darussalam alone has some 400 Jawi manuscripts relating to Brunei with further versions found in collections abroad, such as in the United Kingdom. However, only a few of these manuscripts had been subject to serious philological study.
Recent book on Brunei written by Academy Staff and edited by Professor Ooi Keat Gin


Brunei, although a relatively small state, is disproportionately important on account of its rich resource base. In addition, in recent years the country has endeavored to play a greater role in regional affairs, especially through ASEAN, holding the chair of the organization in 2013, and also beyond the region, fostering diplomatic, political, economic and educational ties with many nations. This book presents much new research and new thinking on a wide range of issues concerning Brunei largely drawn from Bruneian academics. Subjects covered include Brunei’s rich history; its past and present role in regional affairs; the country’s economy, politics, society and culture; the role of Islam; and current concerns.

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Dr Haji Tassim’s USA Experience

In 2014 to 2015, Dr Hj Tassim spent ten months in the USA as a post-doctoral scholar. The first four months were spent at the Asian Studies Program, Ohio University, and the remaining six months at Hawaii University’s East-West Center.

Dr Hj Tassim’s research during these ten months focused on the social and cultural aspects of settlement and resettlement, with special emphasis on Brunei’s ancient Kampong Ayer (water village) and the socio-cultural life of its communities. He is currently preparing a book on this topic that he hopes to publish in 2017.

Dr Hj Tassim expressed that a particularly rewarding part of his USA experience was the opportunity to discuss his research with Asian studies experts at the two institutions. He also attended numerous seminars and lectures and connected with numerous graduate and undergraduate students in Asian and Southeast Asian Studies. Dr Hj Tassim also gave presentations on his research to faculty and students and shared his knowledge of Brunei.
I would like to share my experience as an exchange student in South Korea. I never imagined that I would be given the opportunity to live and study there. I chose Inha University, located in the city of Incheon, about one and a half hours from Seoul. Korea has four seasons, and it snowed when I was there. It was such a 'culture shock' when I first arrived as the culture is very different from Brunei, in terms of lifestyle, language, and in their relationship to each other, which is very polite, especially to the elders. They also pay a lot of attention to their appearance. That's why a lot of mirrors can be found in Korea.

**Place to Stay**

While in Korea, I stayed in the university dormitory that was specifically provided for students on the exchange program. Each student shares a room with three other students. Fatimah, a fellow student from Brunei, was one of my roommates and the other two girls were from Hong Kong, who were very kind, friendly and helpful.

**School**

The Inha University International Center offers a student buddy program. Buddy's provide assistance and information as well as helping exchange students adapt to life in South Korea. I took various modules, such as Basic Korean, Korean Society and Politics and an Introduction to the Korean Economy. I made a lot of friends from Korea and other countries, such as Germany, France, Indonesia, Spain, Finland, Singapore, Malaysia, Pakistan and China. It was great getting to know them. I could see that the South Korean students work very hard and spent many hours in the library.

**Visits**

South Korea has lots of entertainment and places to visit: Everland, Lotte World, Wolmido, Cats Café, Hello Kitty Café, Hello Kitty Café, Trick eye Museum, historical sites, Gyeongbukgung and Chandeokgung palaces, traditional Korean gardens. We also wore Hanbok, a traditional Korean type of clothing. There is also a mosque near Inha University called Mosque Ashrafia. The food places we often visited in Itaewon were Murree Muslim Korean Food, Pizza Plus, The Back Gate Inha: Pastario, Hans Deli, and A'Salam.
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In South Korean people prefer to walk but as they spend more energy walking they seem to eat double amount of food. There is also a culture of drinking. They also like to brush their teeth regardless of the place and always take their toothbrush with them. Make-ups and mirrors are everywhere for the perfect appearance. Lastly, they are very respectful and friendly people.

Halal food is difficult to find in South Korea, especially away from Seoul. Most halal restaurants are located in Itaewon area and the most accessible is seafood. Communicating was difficult at first but I took the Basic Korean module which really helped. We got lost a few times, despite looking up directions on the internet, but thanks to the tourist information we managed to find the location we sought. It also took a little time to get used to the cold weather.

Korea is a very nice country. I got to experience loads while there and I can now adapt myself to new and different cultures. I really miss Korea and want to go back soon.
My Discovery Year was a memorable and electrifying experience that changed my view of the outside world. I had the opportunity to spend a semester at Mahidol (Mahidon) University International College, Thailand. Studying at Mahidol University helped me look at things from a different perspective and improved my critical thinking and analytical skills. Moreover, the college teachers, or ajans as they are known in Thailand, were very supportive through my stay on both a personal and academic level.

One of the initial challenges I experienced while studying abroad was communication. Initially it was difficult for me to interact with teachers, students and locals because I didn’t speak Thai. Fortunately, Mahidol University provides language training and I soon learned to speak Thai. This made it easy for me to adapt to the “Land of The Smiles” and to understand and use the local public transportation system so I could explore the country at weekend or when there was a holiday.

Two of my most memorable moments were Thai cultural events. The first of these was Loy Kratong and The King of Thailand’s birthday celebration, both major events in the country. Participating in these events brought me closer to Thai culture and helped me understanding the people. Being at Mahidol and living in a different culture changed the way I look at the world. It was an experience money could not buy.
Academy Students Charity Project

Nine students from the Academy held a three day charity bazaar at Taman Jubli Perak Sultan Hj Hassanal Bolkiah, to raise funds for needy families as part of their final year project. Hjh Nurul Arifah Hj Ali Aziz, spokesperson for the addition to being able to help those in need, the project allowed them “to gain first-hand experience in managing an event” and that it also helped the vendors who participated as it “promoted their online shops and boosted their sales”.

Academy Students History and Heritage Research Project in Kampong Sungai Liang

As part of the Academy’s year one module, Masyarakat dan Budaya Brunei (Brunei Society and Culture) taught by Noralipah binti Haji Mohammed, 61 undergraduate students embarked on a research project in 2015 on the History and Heritage of Kampong Sungai Liang in Brunei. The students carried out interviews with local residents, recorded their stories, and examined and catalogued historical sites. In addition to documenting the history and heritage of Kampong Sungai Liang, the project aimed to introduce students to research and research methods and included a workshop on research skills that preceded fieldwork. The research results were presented at the Liang Lumut Recreational Club in Kuala Belait. The Brunei History Centre, who collaborated in the project, plan to publish the result in book form.
Students from Universiti Malaysia Sabah Visit the Academy of Brunei

80 undergraduates from Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) came to the Academy of Brunei Studies in May on an educational visit together with four of their lecturers. They were welcomed by Pengiran Khairul Rijal bin Pengiran Haji Abdul Rahim and Academy students who organized trips to the Royal Regalia Building, the Malay Technological Museum and the Brunei Maritime Museum. The visit aimed to foster closer relations between students from the Academy and Sabah.
In March 2015, Academy students led a Cleanliness Awareness Campaign at Tungku Beach that attracted hundreds of volunteers. The initiative was part of a project for Academy undergraduate students taking the module on NGOs, taught by Awang Abdul Hai. The event was supported by the Department of Environment, Parks and Recreation (JASTRe), Ministry of Development, Hi Tune Motor Sport, Aftzam Services and ABM Jaya Contractors.

Return Visit: Academy Students Visit Universiti Malaysia Sabah

In September, 31 Academy students and four members of staff returned the compliment by travelling to USM for a three-day visit. The trip was organized by the Academy’s student body, the Badan Perhubungan dan Kesejahteraan Mahasiswa/i (BPKM), which carries out various academic, non-academic and charity work throughout the university year. Academy students were keen to build on the ties they had made with their counterparts from Sabah and to learn about Sabah culture, the USM learning environment, and share and exchange ideas. The visit certainly served to strengthen ties between students and lecturers from the respective institutions who discussed many future events and collaborations. The visit included trips to the Aquarium and Marine Museum, located on the UMS campus, and the UMS bookstore, a cultural performance by UMS students and football tournament organized by UMS history students.
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