Selamat Hari Raya

Maaf Zahir dan Batin

Eid Mubarak

from

The Management & Staff
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
I, Nobuyuki Yamaguchi, am a relatively new staff at the Institute of Tropical Biodiversity and Sustainable Development, University Malaysia Terengganu, since December 2019. I am a zoologist, and fascinated especially by large carnivores, such as lions, tigers and bears. I have been involved in lion research for the last 20 years since my days in Oxford University UK, and lucky to work with productive researchers worldwide. A recent paper published in the PNAS entitled “the evolutionary history of extinct and living lions” is one of the results of such collaboration.
Our recent work suggests, for the first time based on the whole genome analysis, that the extinct Pleistocene cave lion might not hybridised with the extant modern lion. Also, our work showed, like a time machine, that some of the recently extinct lion populations, such as the North African Barbary lion, might have possessed a relatively high genetic diversity up until the very moment when they became extinct in the last c. 200 years. On the other hand, such genetic diversity appears to become lower in some extant lion populations today, suggesting an urgent need for efficient conservation for lion (genetic) diversity.

https://www.pnas.org/content/early/2020/04/28/1919423117

A male lion in the Addo Elephant National Park, South Africa.

Male and female lions in the Gir Lion Sanctuary, India.
In our international team, we have researchers in the fields of behavioural ecology, palaeontology, laboratory biology, and bioinformatics. When I first started to work with people in the field of ancient biomolecular (aDNA) research we barely succeeded in extracting mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) from old museum materials. But, now, what we are doing is research on whole genomes of Pleistocene specimens of more than 10,000 years old. The advances in science and technology in one’s career time (let alone one’s lifetime) is truly amazing. It is not only the techniques available in the laboratory, but also in the field of bioinformatics. At the same time, it is good to know that old morphological research using museum specimens are still important too.

For the last 20 years, the lion “project” has taken me to many different countries across Europe, Africa, and Asia. For me, research is always fun and very enjoyable. I am looking forward to enjoying research at the University Malaysia Terengganu.

Source: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Nobuyuki Yamaguchi, nobuyuki.yamaguchi@umt.edu.my; INSTITUTE OF TROPICAL BIODIVERSITY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (BIO-D TROPIKA)

Male and female lions in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve, Botswana.
SHORT TERM NIHONGO PARTNERS PROGRAMME
This program was initiated by Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur (JFKL) to introduce the Japanese Language and Culture to university students as a tribute to the upcoming Tokyo Olympic 2020 in Japan this coming summer.

PPAL welcomed four Nihongo Partners (NPs) to UMT to assist the Japanese lecturers in the classroom for one month starting from 26th February 2020 until the end of March 2020. However, due to Movement Control Order (MCO) implemented by the government of Malaysia, they had to fly back to Tokyo on 18th March 2020.

These Nihongo Partners (NPs) came to UMT to assist the Japanese Language lecturer and teacher in teaching the Japanese writing Hiragana, Katakana and Kanji in the classroom. They were assigned as speaking partners to the students who enrol in Japanese language class. Every Thursday, they conducted special classes for Japanese culture sessions such as Introduction to Shodo (Japanese calligraphy) and Yukata wearing. Unfortunately due to the unforeseen circumstance, Furoshiki session and Sushi making session had to be cancelled. They teach UMT staff Survival Japanese for one hour class too.

The students enjoyed the classes very much and the NPs’ presence really motivated them to learn more about Japanese language and culture. Students learned the unique and plausible Japanese way of working and they were so excited. The students claimed that this event should be conducted every semester. A number of UMT staff gained some experience as well. PPAL arranged a one-day homestay program for the NPs for them to stay with UMT staff who volunteered to participate in the program.

Source: Dr. Azza Jauhar Ahmad Tajuddin, azzajauhar@umt.edu.my; CENTRE FOR FUNDAMENTAL AND CONTINUING EDUCATION
HONEY IS HEALTH AND WEALTH
UMT RESEARCHERS STATED IN SEMINAR KELULUT UMT 2020

Apis & Meliponine Special interest group of University Malaysia Terengganu, UMT Jaya Holding Sdn. Bhd. and Persatuan Lebah dan Kelulut Terengganu (PELEKAT) had successfully co-organized a Two Day “SEMINAR KELULUT 2020” on the 7th and 8th March 2020.

Members from Apis and Melionine SIG group delivered current research and progress of beekeeping strategies in Malaysia. The seminar was opened with a keynote address by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shamsul Bahri Abd Razak, the chairman of the organizing committee. In the opening talk, he mentioned honey physio-chemical nature was affected by the drying and heating temperature and suggested various best practices in the storage of honey as well as health benefits.

Dr. Wahizatul Afzan Azmi explained about the fungal role in the development of larvae in vitro while Prof. Madya Dr. Khairul Anuar Mat Amin delivered his talk related to wound healing properties of honey and explained about his research findings. The genetic diversity of two different species of stingless bees around Terengganu was explained by Dr. Wan Bayani Wan Omar. Conservation of two important species of stingless bee will ensure pollination and crop production added in her talk.
The apiculture can attract the api-tourism as an additional income by organizing bee colonies with proper food source facilities for bees. These steps provide better production and better income for breeders. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mustafa Man introduced the information technology in easy and advanced techniques for beekeeping which facilitates the beekeeping community. He explained his research model for the Bee colony control and monitoring system operated by the internet of things (IoT). Dr. Nur Aida Hashim mentioned her talk about threats from various pests to bee colonies and precautionary measures for best practices in pest control. Prof. Nora’aini Ali explained about the Green liposome encapsulation of flavonoids from Indo-Malayan stingless bee’s propolis in rubber smallholding plantations. She also mentioned the wound healing activity of honey extracted from the rubber gardens. Dr. Fauziah Tufail Ahmad mentioned that utilizing stingless bee by-product which is propolis and she used the propolis extract in local fruits coating. Her experiment shows the treatment prevents the spoilage of fruits. Prof. Madya Dr. Mohd Nizam Lani mentioned the microbial load on honey and propolis and their function in contributing to the health benefit of honey.

Seventy participants mostly from the beekeeping community attended this integrated seminar and interacted with the researchers and shared new ideas in meliponiculture. The various exhibition booths and culinary demonstration showcased in this seminar also attracted the audiences.

Source: Assoc. Prof. Dr. Shamsul Bahri Abd Razak; shamsul@umt.edu.my & Dr. Mannur Ismail Shaik; mannurismail@umt.edu.my, FACULTY OF FISHERIES AND FOOD SCIENCES
When the Prime Minister announced MCO, it had redefined our perspectives of work and delivering results as required to meet institutional KPIs. The first action was to remind everyone on the need to have 50 high impact publications in 2020. The majority took the reminder with great pride, and certain felt like being in a “pressure cooker” situation. According to our colleague, Dr Surin Suksuwan, an Environmental Consultant, our ability to implement and observe the MCO is partly due to previous experiences learnt during the Communist Emergency in 1948-1960. The Briggs’ Plan was implemented where new villages were created and people’s movements were controlled so that the guerrillas were cut off from their sources of support amongst the rural populations. Just like the EMCO areas now. Malaysia is the “domino that stood”. We fought the communist insurgency and won. A few took the MCO situation to the social media for the sympathy of bad situation. Many are actively updating the status of their social media (FB and WhatsApp group) and posting or re-post materials that probably could potentially become a good narrative for their write up (e.g. daily cases of COVID-19 cases or social distancing issues in the country).

However, we decided to focus on the next generation of researchers (NGR). Days before the MCO we discussed on collaborative co-authoring of book chapters and manuscripts for bulletin or indexed journals. We send out emails and WhatsApp groups to engage as many authors seeking on willingness to contribute, to conceptualise ideas, to share information or to brainstorming of concepts. The WhatsApp and email inboxes were overwhelmed with messages, ideas, bits and pieces of paragraphs and pages of potential manuscripts. COVID-19, biodiversity, and multidisciplinary secondary data were screened using Web of Science and Scopus. The researcher must fully utilise this COVID-19 pandemic period as most prominent publishers are open up their books and articles collection for free access or open access, free webinars and seminars through the online system. We have revisited rejected manuscripts and rewritten manuscripts for high impact journals. After about 60 days of MCO, we engaged about 10 NGR as co-authors; we had submitted 10 papers to Q1 and Q2 journals, Scopus-indexed journals, as well as UMT bulletin.

In the hindsight, MCO has given NGR an opportunity during a challenging time to test their grit to produce results in a very restrictive environment while WFH. The senior mentors must have higher order thinking or have the ability to use their skills and experiences to empower NGR to use secondary unpublished data found in FYPs. Based on our experience, we generated 10 data articles of otherwise useless information collecting dusts on our bookracks. We Malaysian have been long involved in heavy weigh research. Malaysian scientists, Prof Emeritus Lam Sai Kit were involved in isolating and describing the Nipah virus, who later received the Merdeka Award. While embracing the MCO, we must utilize this quiet moment to reflect and continue to explore creative ways to write and publish as part of knowledge sharing.

Figure 1: The information of the disease and its nature of zoonanthroponosis was drafted and disseminate through university bi-monthly bulletin.
Figure 2: Several authors have provided inputs on the COVID-19 and the preparedness of local zoos in the zoonotic control management to form a commentary. The commentary submitted to Scopus-indexed journal for consideration and review.

Figure 3: Full article was published during MCO period by the journal Science of The Total Environment, ranked Q1 of Environmental Science category in 2018 by InCites Journal Citation Reports by Clarivate Analytics.
KURSUS PENYELIDIKAN & INOVASI

PENULISAN ARTIKEL DARIPADA HASIL PENYELIDIKAN

Prof. Dato' Dr. Mohd Tajuddin Abdullah
Pengarah
Institut Biodiversiti Tropika dan Pembangunan Lestari

14 MEI 2020 | KHAMIS
10:00 PAGI – 12:00 TENGAH HARI

Anjuran :
Pusat Pembangunan Bakat dan Inovasi &
Pusat Pengurusan Pengetahuan dan Teknologi Komunikasi

Source: Prof. Dato' Dr Mohd Tajuddin Abdullah, email: mohd.tajuddin@umt.edu.my; Dr. Marzuki Ismail, marzuki@umt.edu.my; Dr. Edinur Hashim Atan, edinur@usm.my; Muhamad Aidilil Zahidin, aiditarsier@gmail.com; Mohd Noor Afiq Ramlee, afiqramlee91@gmail.com; Dennis Ten Choon Yung, dennis@wildlife.gov.my.
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