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MY DIARY

Starting from June 2013 session, POLIMAS decided to start off classes at 8.15am. Even though I am not sure of the rationale, I am prepared to go along with it. Probably, the 15 minutes duration is for the lecturers to be ready after clocking-in by 8.00am. Ummm... quite a thoughtful strategy. Remember the time when the Peninsular Malaysia and Sabah/Sarawak were having half-an-hour difference time zone? In Jitra, the sun rises at about 7.15am, so by 8.15am it is already bright. The old saying, *the earliest birds take all the worms* should be on everyone's mind.



At exactly 8.00 o'clock on 24 June 2013, I was at BK13. There were 15 semester 5 students in the class and the lecturer was making preparation to start lesson. There were some students in the next two classes, BK10 and BK12. They were seen moving chairs from one class to the other. The cleanliness around the area is acceptable but there is always room for improvement. If we could provide some brooms probably the students could put them to good use for a few minutes. I believe that everyone likes to contribute if given a chance.



A cleaner turned up to sweep around the area at 8.20am. Probably she has started somewhere else earlier. What surprised me most was when I overheard she advised one student to study hard. May be she knew the student but all the same, if this is the kind of culture, we will definitely win the battle. On the way to BK13, I passed through students' favourite sitting place. From the remnants, someone must have thrown a party the night before. It is well and good. However, there were some empty cans/bottles and barbeque stove left around. The irony is, there is a dustbin within sight. There was also a wooden table left overnight. We definitely must learn to treat government property as we treat our own.



At about 10.00am, a senior lecturer, Sharina invited me to visit three laboratories; highway, geotechnics and soil under Civil Engineering Department. I think the equipment needs upgrading. The student intake is simply too high and even the chairs are in short supply. To fulfill the requirement of the programme, students are transported to use facilities at UNIMAP campus in Perlis. It is not free of course. However, the few staff I met still showed high spirit and commitment. All they ask for are proper tools and space to share their expertise and know-how. It should match the transformation slogan we are shouting about.



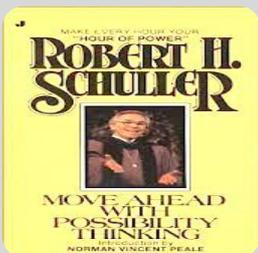
On 16 June 2013, POLIMAS opened its door to new students. It must be the most popular choice of all polytechnics for 1637 actually enrolled. To cater for the freshies, it has been decided that all 1382 beds at the hostels are reserved for them. The locals are persuaded to commute from their homes. If there is an issue that has widely been talked about, it must be the accommodation at the hostels. It charges the lowest rate in the country at RM60 for 6 months. The facilities include free electricity and water, a cafeteria, an internet café, laundry service, an Islamic centre, security, wardens, games and recreation facilities and a live-in medical assistant. What else would anyone ask for?

I was assigned to brief the parents. Those who came from afar and probably having first time experience sending their children away from home looked worried. We cannot blame them. I told them I had experienced that same feeling 3 times and everything was all right. If the others have looked after my children well, so it is my turn to do likewise with their children. I pointed out the perennial problem our students are suffering from, which is the lack of English mastery. They should also try to buy laptop or netbook for their children. During semester break, they should encourage them to look for temporary jobs to earn some money. A father from Kelantan conveyed his problem. As he reached Grik, his car broke down and he had to use the money spared for the fees. I said we welcome him all the same and gave him some time to settle it. Zainuddin Jaafar, HoD of HEP has probably been losing sleep over the last few days. He assured the parents, POLIMAS is doing its utmost seeking alternative accommodation for the students. Both parties must work together to overcome the challenge. His team members have shown first class commitment towards resolving problems. Congratulations and thank you.



For the closing ceremony of MSK, we invited Datuk Tajul Urus Mat

Zain, the education EXCO of the Kedah State Government. He turned up to be the right man for many reasons. One of them is that he was a teacher before. He provided much advice and motivation to the freshies. We requested for a role in the state government initiative to roll out multi-billion 'Zon Industri Petroleum Yan' (ZIPY). He was positive and asked us to form a committee to see him soonest. The Town and Regional Planning (DPW) programme which is under Civil Engineering department is our flagship niche area. We also hope the new Menteri Besar accepts our invitation to the coming convocation on 27 August 2013. We could probably further convince him that POLIMAS is ready to come on stream in many more ways. We should seriously be adopting *Possibility Thinking*, espoused by Dr Robert H. Schuller.



On 26 June 2013, we had a distinguished guest from JPP, Tn Hj Ghaus b. Ab **Kadir.** He was here to explain the second phase of Transformation Plan under Jerayawara initiative. I will write about it in more detail in the coming installment. What everyone remembers best is the paradigm shift to change our inferiority complex syndrome. He quoted some examples to prove the point. When any university faculty member ask where do we come from, we always say, "dari politeknik, JE.." (we are **ONLY** from polytechnic). When our students are asked where they study, they say, "di politeknik, JE...". It sounds inferior. It sounds substandard. This must change. A better phrase would be, "Kami dari politeknik, TAU" (we are from polytechnic, **YOU KNOW**). I remember Tun Mahathir Mohamad reminded about the fact that we were under foreign power for 450 years. To achieve independence is one thing but to really break from the shackle of inferiority complex is another. While having tea with Ghaus later, he revealed that the phrases *JE* and *TAU* are the copyright of Dato' Mohlis Jaafar, our DG.



Jerayawara

On 27 June 2013, I went around the main academic block known

as the 7-storey building. The lifts work fine for we pay for the maintenance every month. I wish the condition to be at par with the lifts at hotels with picture and promotion frames on the wall. Just after 10.00am, I entered the male students' toilet. Bingo! As expected they were a few students puffing cigarettes voraciously. Personally I have no grudge against any smokers except for their habit of throwing cigarette butt into the sink. Sometimes the inconsiderate would also dispose the packet into the toilet bowl. Why can't we gazette a special area for those who choose to cut short of their life? I am told there is a secret haven for these addicts near the water tank. The only question that came to my mind was: are they using money from PIPTN to buy the fag?



In the afternoon tragic news reached me. A newly registered

student and her parents were involved in an accident a kilometer from the campus. Apparently the car collided with another car at the traffic light. The freshy was given an outpatient treatment at Hospital Jitra while both the father and mother have been admitted at Hospital Sultanah Bahiyah, Alor Setar. Unfortunately, the father succumbed to his injury. With thousands of registered bike users in POLIMAS, it is wise to remind each other to be courteous while on the road.



Another tragic episode in June was concerned with Final Examination

results. On 19 June, I chaired Appeal Meeting for those who received DISMISSED status (GB). Examination Rule stipulates that those with CGPA below 1.6 or failed any course 3 times consecutively will have to pack up. Similarly, if you fly-in to Malaysia, you will be reminded not to touch 2 things, firearm and drug. If you are convicted, the court has no other alternative but to impose mandatory death sentence. A week after, stream of parents and students would come to my office. It is most heartrending to witness frustrated faces on the parents' faces. Some would come with belated medical reports and some would learn about the real conduct of their son/daughter. The examination unit officer, Faidzulli and I would stand our ground. We have to safeguard our quality standard. If we were to give in then we are doing injustice to the thousands and causing harm to our reputation in the long run.



FAIL

Many things happen all the time in POLIMAS. On 20 June 2013, NOKIAHere!

paid us a visit. The three delegates were headed by Marylyn Janial Radius, a Sabahan. They offered our DPW students to take part in mapping roads, buildings and place of interest in our area. It is similar to Google Map. The students will be equipped with proper training and equipment to do the job. Oh, how man has actually conquered the nook and cranny of this earth with three alphabets, **GPS** (Global Positional Systems). Unless you go underground, nothing is hidden. We hope to sign up some kind of official collaboration in the near future. Rozaimi Majid will see that the project will lift off the ground.



Associate Professor Dr Lim Swee Tin

I have attended many functions for various reasons. More often

than not, the MC will recite some 'pantun' at the beginning or the end. 'Pantun' only exists in Bahasa Melayu. The last 2 of the 4 sentences will carry the intended messages. Some 'pantuns' of yesteryears have achieved legendary status. In POLIMAS there is a group of enthusiast in literature works headed by Nik Dahna, our hostel caretaker. On 30 June 2013, I was most fortunate to welcome a very distinguished literature heavy-weight, Associate Professor Dr Lim Swee Tin and Awang Abdullah. Yes, Dr Lim Swee Tin was born Chinese. But, if you hear his speech or discussion about Malay Literature, you will feel ashamed (like I did). His words were so eloquent, his knowledge is deep, his concern is genuine yet he looks so humble. He quoted the following old pantun and decipher its meaning:



*Pucuk Pauh Delima Batu,
Anak Sembilang Di Tapak Tangan,
Walau Pun Jauh Beribu Batu,
Jauh Di Mata Di Hati Jangan.*

Another issue for this installment is about **GE13 (PRU13)**. On Sunday 30 June 2013,

I was invited to attend a dinner at Putra Palace Hotel, in Kangar. The Guest-of-Honour was none other than Tan Sri Abdul Aziz, the SPR Chairman. It was my pleasure to go up the stage to receive Appreciation Certificate on behalf of those who served Arau Parliamentary Constituency. Our actual Returning Officer (RO), Saifullah Musa was away attending directors' meeting in Kuching, Sarawak. The next day, we had a Post-Mortem Meeting chaired by Tan Sri. It lasted for 3 hours with frank revelation, discussion and promise to further improve the system in the coming election. My colleagues and I served as the committee for about a year. We learned much about the election process, dealt with various idiosyncrasies of different people and enjoyed every minute along the way. Thank you SPR Perlis for giving us the opportunity. We will do it all over again if given a chance in future. The best news is there was zero petition for Perlis in the GE13. Congratulations to everyone, especially Ahmad Ibrahim Mohd Tayib, Perlis SPR director and his team members. He deserves a promotion Tan Sri.

