



PERSATUAN SAINS TANAH MALAYSIA

THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY OF SOIL SCIENCE

(Inaugurated on 2nd April 1971, Reg. Number 985 Selangor)

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Message from the MSSS President

First of all, I would like to thank members for electing me as your President for 2007/08. I shall try my best to fulfill your confidence and trust in me to make Malaysian Society of Soil Science (MSSS) the leading society in Malaysia for the benefit of humankind. I would like to congratulate and welcome the new elected members into the management committee. Thanks also to our previous management committee (2006/07) for giving me support to run MSSS successfully. We have planned a number of events for our members this year. Top of the list is our annual event 'Soil Science Conference of Malaysia' (SOILS2008) in Ipoh, Perak. This conference will be jointly organized by MSSS and Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM). The theme of this conference is 'Sustaining soil ecosystems with emphasis on coastal soils'. Our last SOILS2007 conference in Mukah, Sarawak was a great success for the society with more than 600 participants and over 30 booths of exhibitors. I would like to thank the organizing committee for the job well done. Due to the rising cost of publication, we would like to publish our Malaysian Soil Science Journal (MJSS) online by 2008. The new chief-editor of MJSS, Assoc. Prof. Dr Che Fauziah Ishak will look into this possibility. Lastly, I would like to thank the management committee for publishing our MSSS newsletter after a long period of 'inactivation'. Members are encourage to view our website www.e-msss.com for the latest information.

Thank you.

Prof. Dr. Mohamad Hanafi Musa
MSSS President 2007/08
24/9/2007

MSSS 2007 AWARDS

The followings MSSS Fellowships and Awards were conferred to the following recipients in recognitions of their achievements and contributions to the society and country:

MSSS Honorary Award

- YAB Pehin Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud (Chief Minister of Sarawak)

MSSS Fellowships(FMSoil)

- Dr. Chan Kok Weng (MPOB)
- Prof. Dr. Mohd Khanif Yusop (UPM)
- Prof. Dr. Zaharah A. Rahman (UPM)

Young Soil Scientist

- Dr. Lulie Melling (DoA Sarawak)

2007/08 MSSS Management Committee

New Management Committee elected during the 36th MSSS AGM held on the 18th April 2007 are:

President

Prof. Dr. Mohamed Hanafi Musa (UPM)

Immediate Past President

Prof. Dr. Mohd Khanif Yusop (UPM)

Vice President (Pen. Malaysia)

Mr. Goh Kah Joo (AARSB)

Vice President (Sarawak)

Dr. Lulie Melling (DoA, Sarawak)

Vice President (Sabah)

Ms. Elizabeth Malangig (DoA, Sabah)

Hon. Secretary

Dr. Shahrakbah Yacob (AARSB)

Hon. Asst. Secretary

Mr. Nga Shee Kiong (FASSB)

Hon. Treasurer

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Anuar Abdul Rahim (UPM)

Hon. Asst. Treasurer

Tn. Hj. Mustafa Mohamad (Tradewinds)

Committee members

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Rosenani Abu Bakar (UPM)

Mr. Adrian Wong (Kimia Utama)

Ms. Jeyanny Vijayanathan (FRIM)

Mr. S. Subramaniam (Woodman)

Mr. Jopen Abut (DoA, Sarawak)

Co-opt member

Dr. Paramanathan (PASS)

Auditors

Prof. Dr. Shamshuddin Jusop (UPM)

Dr. Ahmad Husni Ahmad Khanif (UPM)

Chief Editor MSSS Journal

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Che Fauziah Ishak (UPM)

MSSS Representatives:

Balai Iktisas Malaysia (BIM)

Prof. Dr. Mohamed Hanafi Musa (UPM)

Dr. Lulie Melling (DoA, Sarawak)

Confederation of Scientific and Technoloigcal Associations in Malaysia (COSTAM)

Dr. Shahrakbah Yacob (AARSB)

Ms. Jeyanny Vijayanathan (FRIM)

Highlight of Soil Science Conference 2007 in Mukah Sarawak

With a growing interest in oil palm cultivation on peat soils, SOILS 2007 had attracted over 600 registered participants making it one of the largest soil science conferences ever organized. Apart from local participants, the conference also attracted scientists from other countries namely Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Japan, Fiji and Iran. The conference was held in Kingwood Resort, Mukah, Sarawak from 17 – 19 April 2007 with "Peat and Other Soil Factors in Crop Production" as the theme. Department of Agriculture Sarawak spearheaded by Dr. Lulie Melling, as the main organizer had successfully laid out a comprehensive programme to disseminate the latest knowledge and findings by prominent speakers. A total of 3 keynotes, 24 papers and 17 posters covering a wide range of topics including peat characteristics, agricultural practices, water management and greenhouse gases. Several exhibitors also took the opportunity to display their agricultural-based products such as advisory services, planting materials, fertilizers, machinery, tools & equipment and local products. To complement the conference, a soil tour was organized at a nearby oil palm plantation. The tour was on oil palm cultivation on peat an eye-opener to most participants. The tour was led by Dr. Paramanathan, who briefed the participants on the different types of peats found in the estate. The representatives from Rinwood Sago Plantations shared their experiences and inputs on estate management. Overall, the conference was a great success and well accepted not only by the participants but also the Sarawak government and local newspapers.

Prepared by Mr. Nga Shee Kiong (FASSB)



Seeds of the future



Hey! That's my line



Mukah's delicacy, sago worms

At last! The final pit

Augering demo on virgin peat



From the eyes of Prof. Margaret Oliver

I was invited to give a keynote paper at this annual meeting of the Society by a former MAgSc student from the Univ. of Reading, Dr Lulie Melling who was the secretary for the meeting. There were 3 keynote papers covering soil resources and plantation agriculture in Malaysia, understanding and managing soil spatial variation for optimal crop production and nitrogen cycling in agro-systems of East Asia. There were 7 sessions; of these 3 focussed on tropical peat, 2 on soil fertility and chemistry and 1 each on precision agriculture, water management and greenhouse gases. The meeting was attended by some 650 participants, mainly from Malaysia and Indonesia, an unbelievable number for a soil science meeting other than those of the World Congress of the IUSS. There were 25 papers and some 17 posters of which five of the latter won an award.

This meeting was an amazing experience – it was held in a hotel to the east of Mukah on the northern coast of Sarawak. It was a very tropical setting with balmy temperatures, exotic flowers, customs and costumes, heavy rain and wonderful sunsets. The opening ceremony alone was well worthwhile being there alone – Deputy Chief Minister, Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Dr George Chan, arrived by helicopter to deliver the Chief Minister's speech, accompanied by other ministers and high ranking civil servants. It was evident that the Government of Sarawak was taking this soil science meeting seriously; if only this were the same in the UK. Tan Sri Dr. George was clearly well informed about the development of peat soil for oil palm production and was aware of the challenges that this soil presents in its development. It was disturbing as European to hear of the concern felt about statements made by NGOs in Europe about the development of peat soil. Clearly, the oil palm is the mainstay of the Malaysian economy and Europe should be providing help for the proper development and protection of this soil type rather than trying to hinder their economic development. It was evident from others at the meeting that the Malaysian soil scientists are as conscious as anyone of the need for sustainable development and their aim is to work with the palm oil producers. It was pointed out to me that they feel myths are perpetrated in the Western press that the further development of oil palm production will harm the habitat of the orang-utan, whereas the truth is that this creature is part of their heritage and a protected animal. Thus, land development is not allowed where it is found. It is also important for tourism and therefore, why would they do anything that might harm its environment was the point that was raised with me by several participants.

The standard of the presentations, the publication of the papers and the posters were of a generally high standard. The variety of food at the conference was amazing and very delicious. The conference dinner was a gala affair attended by the Deputy CM Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Alfred Jabu and several other people associated with the Government. However, this evening held in store some surprises, not least for anyone from abroad! I thought that the idea of eating sago worms was a myth, but with a flash of an axe we saw Tan Sri Alfred open a rotting log from a sago palm. He scabbled around in the rotting wood and hey presto a large white grub about 4 cm long and 1 cm wide appeared on his hand. This was handed around to anyone brave enough to hold – the smell from these worms was so pungent that it put me off being anywhere near to it. Behind Tan Sri Alfred Jabu was a small stove and girls frying the sago worms – these were handed around to the tables like kebabs. They were a delicacy to those in the know – I am ashamed to say that I chickened out of even trying one. This was not the end of the sago worm for the evening – 'foreigners' were invited on to the stage (I am very relieved to be able to say that I kept a very low profile even though I did not realise what was to come). It was a competition – to see how many live sago worms could be eaten by those on stage. I was so glad to be an observer. Among the foreigners, a Japanese delegate ate the most – about 16! However, Dr. Chan Kok Weng was the overall winner. The final morning of the conference was a fieldtrip to see the peat soil in an oil palm plantation close to the hotel. This was the reason for the remote location of the meeting. We saw pits at three different positions in the landscape illustrating the differences in peat formation under the different drainage conditions. I was very interested in peat as an undergraduate, especially with the Somerset Levels on our doorstep and Len Curtis's enthusiasm for augering into the peat to the underlying clay. The tropical peat soil types are so different from the temperate ones and also far more extensive in Malaysia than I had ever realised.

The meeting was a wonderful experience in so many ways – not least what I learned about tropical peat soil and Malaysian culture. Soil Science is a strong subject in Malaysia, let us take some note of this in the UK.

Prof. Margaret A. Oliver (University of Reading, UK)

– This article will also be printed by the British Soil Science Society

Soil Science Conference 2008 in Ipoh, Perak

The next Soil Science Conference was proposed to be held from 15 – 18 April 2007, in Ipoh, Perak. The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) has been given the mandate to organize the next conference, with the main focus on coastal soils planting, conservation and ecosystems. A taskforce has been formed in FRIM, led by Dr. Wan Rasidah Kadir, Head of the Soil Mgmt Branch, under the Forestry Division. The theme proposed in the first taskforce meeting is 'Sustaining Soil Ecosystems With Emphasis on Coastal Soils'. Post conference tours may cover areas of Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve and tin tailing area at FRIM Research station in Bidor. The whole area of the Matang Mangrove Forest Reserve is internationally renowned as the best managed sustainable mangrove forest in Malaysia and among the best managed such forest worldwide. It is also recognized as the outstanding conservation management of the rich diversity of wildlife and habitats that thrive throughout the mangrove and mudflat ecosystems. Approximately 80 percent of the area is managed through a sustainable-yield production system, with a 30-year rotation cycle to produce charcoal and poles. The vinegar produced as by-product from charcoal industry is an excellent soil conditioner. The tin tailings at Bidor consist of slime and sand tailings that are predominantly covered by grass and sparsely colonised by several pioneer species such as *Muntingia calabura*, *Vitex pubescens*, and *Mallotus* species. Further updates regarding the venue, accommodation, etc will be provided in the next newsletter issue and at www.e-msss.com website.

Prepared by Jeyanny Vijayanathan & Dr. Wan Rasidah Kadir (FRIM)

Keeping in Touch

Below is a list of members from whom the society does not have details:

1. Asiah Ahmad (0481)
2. Azlan Ismail (0792)
3. Eswaran Padmanabhan (0656)
4. Farah D. Ghani (0489)
5. Goh Hock Swee (0165)
6. Ismail Hashim (0556)
7. Khaw Cheng Haw (0041)
8. Lam Kee Sang (0415)
9. Leong Chee Onn (0361)
10. Lim Jit Sai (0094)
11. Mahmad Nor Jaafar (0292)
12. Mohd Aris Junus (0505)
13. Nawi Che Yusoff (0510)
14. Nor Herdhawati Jailani (0736)
15. Ong A. Ang (0190)
16. Poon Yew Chin (0028)
17. Tajuddin Ismail (0230)
18. Teoh Cheng Hai (0081)
19. Ting Sie Ping (0665)
20. Wan Hazira Wan Mohd (0759)
21. Wong Kim Lian (0511)
22. Yau Peng Yam (0403)
23. Zainal Abidin Ibrahim (0681)

If you are in touch with any of the above, please forward their details to us. We shall also update the above list of "missing" members in our website www.e-msss.com. So if you have a spare minute or two perhaps you could help us find some more.

Future conferences:

1. MOSTA Agriculture Workshop 2007, 23 – 24 Oct, Kluang, Johor
2. 8th Conf. of the East and Southeast Asian Federation of Soil Science, 22-25 Oct 2007, Tsukuba, Japan
3. International Conf. on Oil Palm and Environment 2007, 15 – 16 Nov 2007, Bali, Indonesia
4. RSPO Roundtable 5 (RT5) Meeting 2007, 22-23 Nov 2007, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
5. International symposium on soil water measurement, 28 Oct-2 Nov, Maryland, USA
6. ASA-CSSA-SSA International annual meeting 4-8 Nov 2007, Louisiana, USA
7. Crop Science Conference 2008, 13-18 Apr 2008, Jeju, South Korea
8. Welcome to the 13th International Peat Congress, 8-13 June 2008, Tullamore, Ireland
9. 9th International Conference of Precision Agriculture, 20-28 Jul 2008, Colorado, USA
10. EUROSIL Congress 2008, 24-29 Aug 2008, Vienna, Austria

On behalf of the MSSS committee, we would like to wish all Muslim members,

A Blessed Holy Month of Ramadhan & Eid Al-Mubarak

For further enquiry, please contact:

THE MALAYSIAN SOCIETY OF SOIL SCIENCE

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