

# MERDEKA AWARD 2012

*Fostering a Culture of Excellence*



MERDEKA  
AWARD

MERDEKA AWARD  
2012

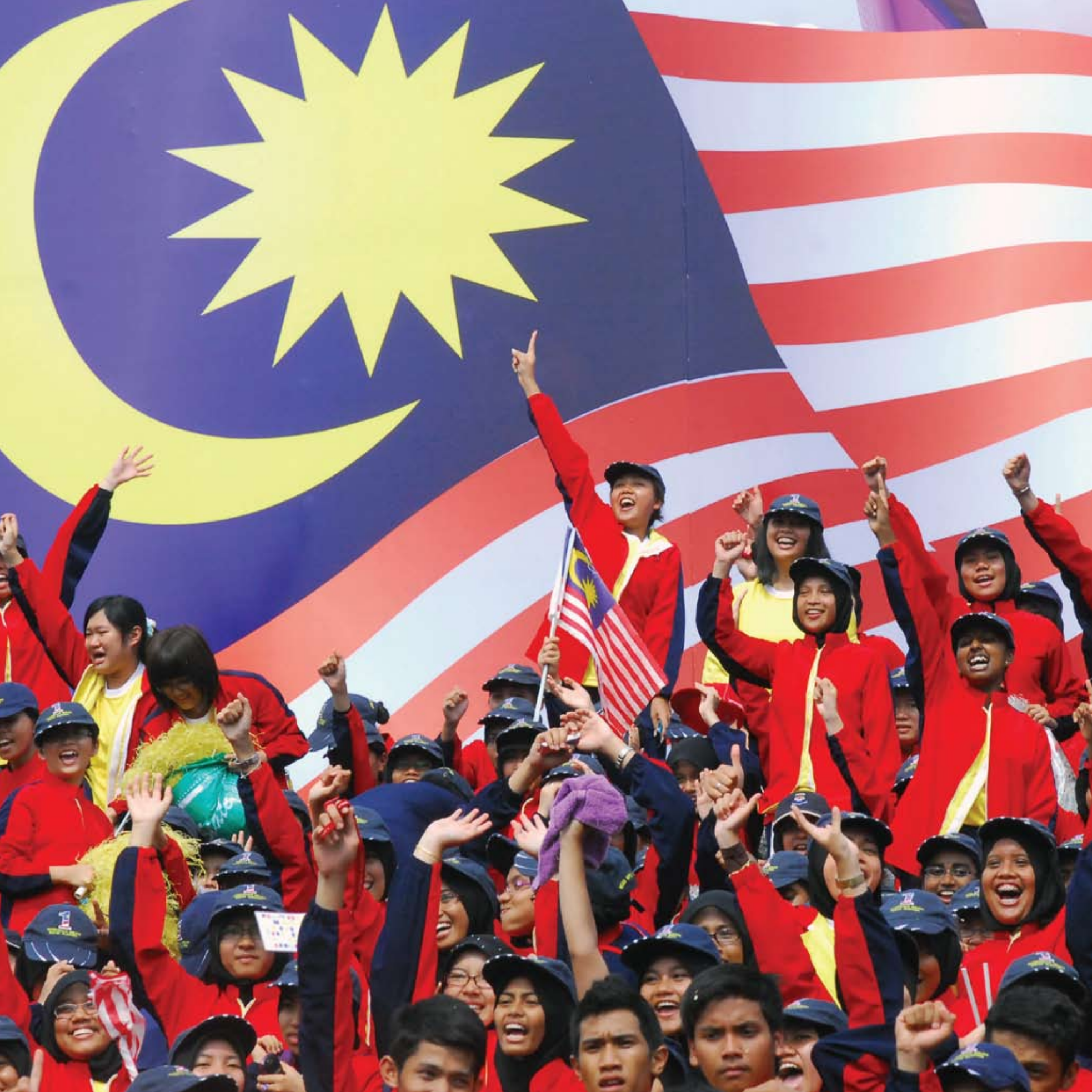
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The Merdeka Award aims to promote thought leadership and innovation, foster a culture of excellence, encourage a world view, thereby enhancing Malaysia's standing as a dynamic, competitive 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Player in all key sectors from science and technology to the arts.

[www.merdekaaward.my](http://www.merdekaaward.my)





# About the Merdeka Award



# The Merdeka Award

## – Fostering a Culture of Excellence

As the Merdeka Award moves into its fifth year of recognising outstanding and exceptional individuals and organisations which have labored tirelessly and selflessly in the interest of the nation and its people, the 2012 Merdeka Award continues to honour those who exemplify the essence of the *Spirit of Merdeka*, that of the liberation of the mind and spirit and the pursuit of excellence.

The relentless pursuit of excellence is what drives the Merdeka Award recipients. This year, three individuals have been recognised for their exceptional and outstanding contribution in diverse fields such as the chemistry of palm oil, Islamic thought and education, and ecology and conservation, but the one element that connects these three outstanding individuals is their passion and unerring commitment to research and scholarship.

In the Health, Science and Technology category, the 2012 Merdeka Award was awarded to YBhg Academician Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Augustine Ong Soon Hock for his outstanding contribution to the research and development of the chemistry and technology of palm oil and for his significant role in advocating and promoting the Malaysian Palm Oil Industry to the world.

Tan Sri Ong is a scientist, innovator, inventor and a pioneer in fundamental palm oil research and has paved the way for younger scientists to support the industry through research and development. Today, he continues to advocate and promote Malaysian palm oil to the world.

The 2012 Merdeka Award for the Outstanding Scholastic Achievement category was awarded to YBhg Tan Sri Professor Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas for his outstanding contribution to the scholarly research in the area of the Islamisation of Contemporary Knowledge and of Muslim Education.

Tan Sri Syed Naquib is a contemporary Islamic scholar and thinker and is recognised as among the most influential Muslim scholars in the world. He has made significant contributions to the study of the history of the modern Malay language, and to the scholarly research in the area of Islamisation of contemporary knowledge and Muslim education.

Among his many achievements is the establishment of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilisation (ISTAC). Tan Sri Syed Naquib continues to contribute towards enhancing Islamic scholarship and understanding through his research and publications.

In the category of Outstanding Contribution to the People of Malaysia, the 2012 Merdeka Award went to Dr Engkik Soepadmo for his outstanding contribution to the research and conservation of Malaysia's forest plant diversity.

Dr Soepadmo is a scientist and ecologist from Indonesia, whose research focuses on species diversity, the complex structure and ecological functioning of tropical rainforests in Asia, especially in Malaysia.

He first came to Malaysia in 1968 and went on to become Professor of Ecology at the University of Malaya. He has described 56 new species of tropical plants and trees, and six species are named after him. Through advocacy, collaboration and scientific research and publications he has contributed significantly towards the establishment of protected forest areas in Malaysia. Dr Soepadmo has also done pioneering work on the reproductive biology and population dynamics of selected groups of economically important tree species.

For 2012 no award was given in the categories of Education and Community and Environment.

The significant contributions of the 2012 Merdeka Award recipients are expected to continue to inspire Malaysians in line with the Merdeka Award's ideals of promoting thought leadership and innovation, fostering a culture of excellence and encouraging a world view, thereby enhancing Malaysia's standing as a dynamic, competitive 21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Player in all key sectors from science and technology to the arts.

With these awards a total of seventeen (17) individuals and two (2) organisations have received the Merdeka Award since it was established in 2007 by three of the largest oil and gas companies in the world, namely PETRONAS, ExxonMobil and Shell.

The Merdeka Award reflects a commitment by the oil and gas industry, which has long played a key role in Malaysia's nation-building efforts, to continue to be a major contributor to the development of the country and its people. The coming together of PETRONAS, ExxonMobil and Shell in presenting this Award reaffirms the industry's commitment to continue to be an integral component of the nation's journey, and the Award seeks to recognise individuals and organisations that epitomise the same kind of commitment for the nation's continued growth and development.



# Nomination & Selection

The nomination and selection of Merdeka Award recipients are administered by the Board of Trustees and six committees – five Nomination Committees and one Selection Committee.

The Board of Trustees comprises two representatives from PETRONAS and one representative each from ExxonMobil and Shell, as well as two independent members.

The Board of Trustees and the various committees go through a long and rigorous selection process that reflects the high ideals of the Merdeka Award.

The committee members are made up of eminent Malaysians and non-Malaysians, bringing with them a wealth of knowledge, experience and expertise to allow them to nominate and select outstanding individuals and/or organisations that have laboured tirelessly, with great sincerity and conviction for the good of this country and its people.

Each year, the committee members will deliberate, examine the merits and finer qualities of each nominee, and in the end, identify those who stand above and beyond the rest, in their embodiment of the *Spirit of Merdeka*.

# Categories & Recipients 2012

## EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

*No Recipient*

## ENVIRONMENT

*No Recipient*

## HEALTH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Academician Tan Sri Emeritus Professor**

**Datuk Dr Augustine Ong Soon Hock**

*For outstanding contribution to the research and development of the chemistry and technology of palm oil and for his significant role in advocating and promoting the Malaysian palm oil industry to the world*

## OUTSTANDING SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

**Tan Sri Professor Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas**

*For outstanding contribution to the scholarly research in the area of islamisation of contemporary knowledge and of Muslim education*

## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA

**Dr Engkik Soepadmo**

*For outstanding contribution to the research and conservation of Malaysia's forest plant diversity*

## Health, Science & Technology

Awarded to individuals and/or organisations to honour the creation, development, support and application of new and innovative technology that improve the lives of people everywhere.



ACADEMICIAN TAN SRI EMERITUS PROFESSOR DATUK DR AUGUSTINE ONG SOON HOCK

## PROFILE

Academician Tan Sri Emeritus Professor Datuk Dr Augustine Ong Soon Hock was born on 18 September 1934, in Malacca. He was raised by his paternal grandmother in a small rubber plantation in Malacca, following the death of his father when he was seven years old. Academically inclined since his early years in school, his academic pursuit began when he decided to challenge himself with chemistry, physics and mathematics during his secondary residential education at St Francis Institution in Malacca. “It was in St Francis that my foundation in Science was laid,” he says.

Excelling in school, Tan Sri Ong was accepted for pre-university education at the St Johns Institution in Kuala Lumpur. He attended University of Malaya between 1954 and 1959 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science, First Class Honors, and subsequently an MSc. His passion for chemistry showed in his excellent academic achievements, where he was awarded a gold medal for chemistry. “It is a way for me to understand nature,” he says. “Chemistry is a powerful discipline to explain nature.”

Tan Sri Ong began his career as a lecturer with University of Malaya in 1959. He was a Fulbright-Hays Fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of



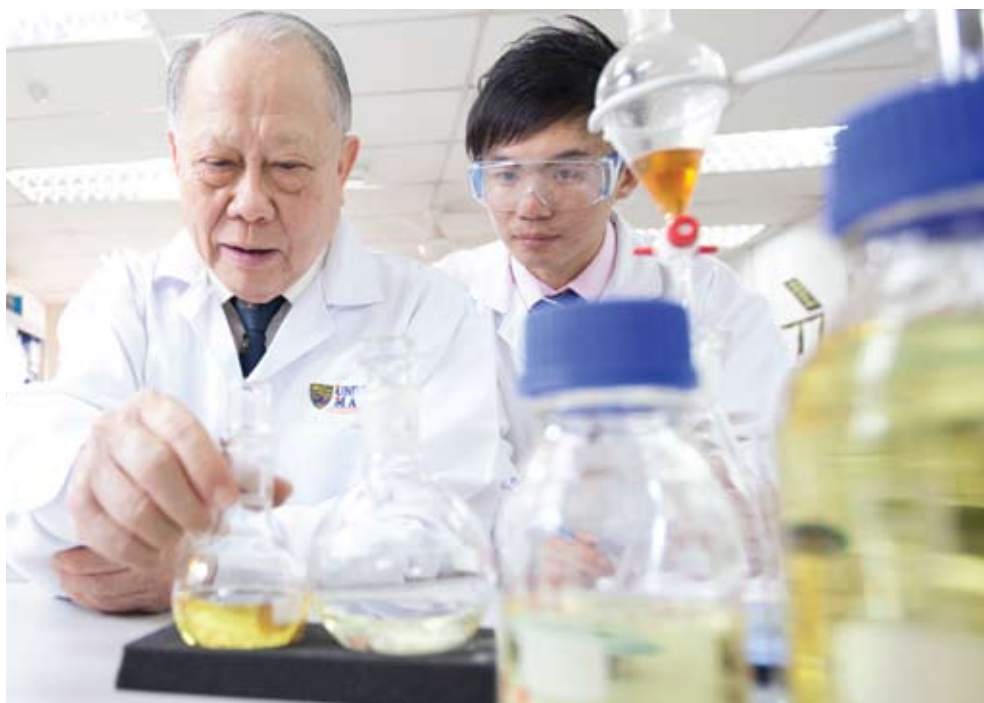


Technology (MIT) USA from 1966 to 1967 and prior to this he read for a PhD in Organic Chemistry at the University of London King's College, 1961-1963.

In 1970, he was appointed senior lecturer at the University of Science Malaysia (USM), and promoted to the position of Professor of Physical Organic Chemistry in 1974. Seeking to expand his knowledge, Tan Sri Ong took a one-year sabbatical leave to attend the University of Oxford as Visiting Professor at the Dyson Perrins Laboratory in 1976. On his return to USM, he was appointed Dean of the School of Chemical Sciences at USM from 1977 to 1981. From 1981 to 1985 and 1990 to 1991, he was appointed Visiting Professor at the same university.

Between 1959 and 2011, Tan Sri Ong authored or co-authored 400 articles. "All these articles arose from ideas," he says. "My strategy has been concentrated on the world of ideas. Ideas are top priority in getting new findings and inventions."

Together with his colleagues Tan Sri Ong also co-authored two books. His first book with SH Goh and Rayson L Huang, "The Chemistry of Free Radicals" was published in 1974. The book has been used by the University of Oxford as a resource material. His significant research findings include the conformation of free radicals and SH<sub>2</sub> cleavage of t-butyl peroxide. Along with his colleague, Prof Etsuo Niki, Tan Sri Ong co-authored a book on free radicals and antioxidants



Tan Sri Ong with an oil sample in a flask for research at Unit of Research on Lipids, University of Malaya

entitled "Nutrition, Lipids, Health and Disease" in 1995.

Tan Sri Ong obtained his first patent from Britain in 1974 on lipids research of olein-stearin separation method. He later added 15 more patents to his name in palm oil research. These patents are from the US, the UK, Japan, Australia and Malaysia. His research on palm oil covered several aspects of palm oil; from its chemical composition, nutritional value, technical training and to its waste treatment. Tan Sri Ong was also a co-researcher in the isolation of tocotrienols from palm fatty acid distillate. Tocotrienols, an anti-oxidant, has beneficial effects on brain neurons, is loaded with anti-cancer properties, and lowers the levels of bad cholesterol. Tan Sri Ong's research inspired other scientists in

other parts of the world to conduct similar research on palm oil.

The conversion of palm oil to biodiesel was conceptualised by Tan Sri Ong in 1981. The project began with a pilot plant study, went on to field trials and subsequently proceeded to mass production for commercialisation in Malaysia, Thailand and South Korea. Today, Malaysia is one of the world's leading biofuel producers, with 58 plants approved for production.

Tan Sri Ong has worked tirelessly and passionately in advocating and promoting Malaysian palm oil to the world. Just shy of one month in office, Tan Sri Ong, as Director-General of the Palm Oil Research Institute of Malaysia (PORIM), had to deal with the Anti-Palm Oil Campaign from the



American Soybean Association (ASA) in March 1987. He spent two years in challenging the anti-palm oil campaign. As part of his efforts to counter the fight against palm oil, Tan Sri Ong advised the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on the nutritional aspects of the palm oil, addressed the American media and nutritionists and established several nutrition advisory committees worldwide. Tan Sri Ong used research and scientific evidence to convince his detractors of the health benefits of palm oil. "Although efforts made to work out peaceful arrangements with the ASA were attempted, these were turned down. "We had no choice but to counter the campaign which was essentially a trade issue under the guise of health," he says.

The ASA called for a truce in 1989, ending the Anti-Palm Oil Campaign. Today, scientists acknowledge the nutritional value of palm olein, a new source of healthy oil with nutritional values at par to extra-virgin olive oil but at a fifth of the price. "The Campaign stimulated a lot of research all over the world, some sponsored by PORIM. It was a blessing in disguise. These efforts helped us to realise that palm oil is not harmful to health and that it has almost a perfect structure for good health," he adds.

Tan Sri Ong continues to devote his time and energy to learning, discovering, and enhancing the chemistry and technology of palm oil. Between 2006 and 2011, he conducted continuous research on palm oil and contributed to several discoveries. Among them is the sn-2 hypothesis, proposed with his colleague Dr S H Goh, which showed that palm oil is less fattening than corn oil and soy bean oil, based on comparisons of their triglyceride structures. He created a new palm oil milling process which resulted in zero waste. The patented process was based on a concept that oil palm fruits are edible, including palm puree fractioned upon removing crude palm oil, thus creating a new source of healthy food for the world. The novel process identified new sources of carotenes, vitamin B complex, beneficial polyphenols and vitamin E



Tan Sri Ong with oil palm produced by tissue culture in a test tube, at Malaysian Palm Oil Board (MPOB) premises in Bandar Baru Bangi

including tocotrienols. Tan Sri Ong also created a new green product by expoxidising used cooking oil which is very beneficial to the environment.

Tan Sri Ong's love for science is not only limited to research and development, but also in nurturing new scientists, technologists and inventors. He established the Malaysian Invention and Design Society (MINDS) in 1987 and remains its President today. MINDS was established to encourage people to think independently and creatively without barriers. MINDS is also designed to assist scientists and technologist to develop their ideas into inventions, and to commercialise the innovations. "Ultimately MINDS encourages every Malaysian, hopefully Asians, to believe in themselves; to think and provide solutions for development and for life. When we deal with nature where science can play a role, members of MINDS could be trained to deal with the material world and use knowledge of science to provide solutions," he says.

Tan Sri Ong has received various awards for his achievements. In 2009, Tan Sri Ong was made Honorary Fellow of The International Society of Professional Engineers in Los Angeles California. The International Federation of Inventors' Association (IFIA) awarded him the Officer of The International Order of Merit of the Inventors (IOMI) in 2009 and in 2010 he was presented with a medal & certificate on the 20th Anniversary of the Polish Union of Association of Inventors and Rationalizers (PZSWIR). In 2011, he



Tan Sri Ong with sons Albert and Stephen at the University of Oxford

was made Fellow of King's College, London, and received the Palm Oil Industry Leadership Award (PILA).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

A discussion on Malaysian palm oil rarely takes place without the mention of Tan Sri Ong, who is considered by many to be a 'father figure' in the Malaysian palm oil industry. Tan Sri Ong played an important role in overturning the negative campaign against palm oil and has set a legacy that continues to strengthen the palm oil industry and its contribution to the Malaysian economy. A pioneer in Malaysia's palm oil industry, he has paved the way for many scientists to build on his work in supporting the industry.

A father of four, 78-year-old Tan Sri Ong remains active in the palm oil industry today, as he continues to



Tan Sri Ong and family

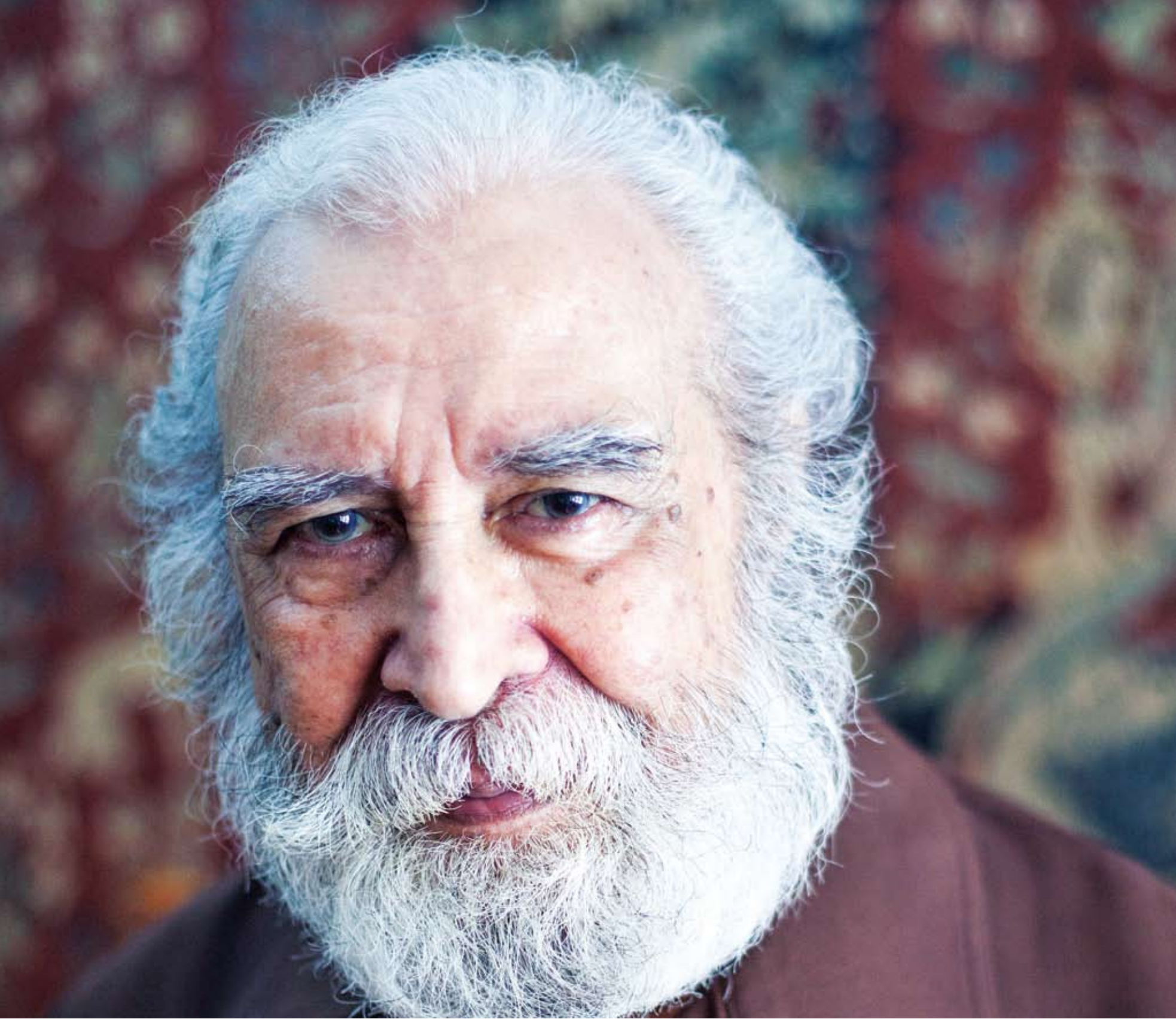
nurture his passion for chemistry and for nature. Currently, Tan Sri Ong's research is focused on environment-friendly projects that could help the world reduce its carbon footprint.

As an eminent scientist, innovator and inventor he continues to guide and nurture younger scientists in their quest to achieve world-class breakthroughs. His unerring commitment and dedication truly personifies the Spirit of Merdeka and its pursuit of excellence.

# Outstanding Scholastic Achievement

Awarded to a scholar conducting or playing  
a major role in academic research resulting  
in significant discovery.





TAN SRI PROFESSOR DR SYED MUHAMMAD NAQUIB AL-ATTAS



## PROFILE

Tan Sri Professor Dr Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas was born in Bogor, West Java, on 5 September, 1931. In 1937 he joined his paternal relations in Johor Bahru. He received his early education in Sukabumi and Johor Bahru. He later studied at the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst, England and, subsequently, at the University of Malaya, Singapore, McGill University, Canada and the University of London, England.

Tan Sri Syed Naquib received his M.A and Ph.D. (1965) from McGill University, and the University of London respectively with a special focus on Islamic philosophy, theology and metaphysics. His two-volume doctoral thesis on The Mysticism of Hamzah Fansuri remains the most important and comprehensive work to-date on one of the greatest and perhaps most controversial Sufi scholars in the Malay world. He returned to Malaysia in 1964, and in 1965 became the Head of the Division of Literature in the Department of Malay Studies at the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur. Between 1968 and 1970 he served as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts. He later in 1970 became one of the founders of the National University Malaysia where he founded and directed the Institute of Malay Language, Literature, and Culture (IBKKM).

As a scholar of Islam, Tan Sri Syed Naquib has made significant contribution to the contemporary world of Islam in the domains of the Islamisation of contemporary knowledge and of Muslim



education. He was responsible for the conceptualisation of the Islamic University, which he initially formulated at the First World Conference on Muslim Education, held in Makkah (1979).

In 1987, Tan Sri Syed Naquib founded and directed the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC), a world-class post-graduate institution where he taught and collected, over a ten-year period, the unique multilingual library comprising more than one hundred and forty thousand volumes including rare books and manuscripts.

The ISTAC library represents a collection of the very best ideas, selected and adapted from fine examples collected from all over the world. It demonstrates an infrastructure produced by serious thought and strong commitment resulting in the establishment of a dynamic, world-class educational institution.

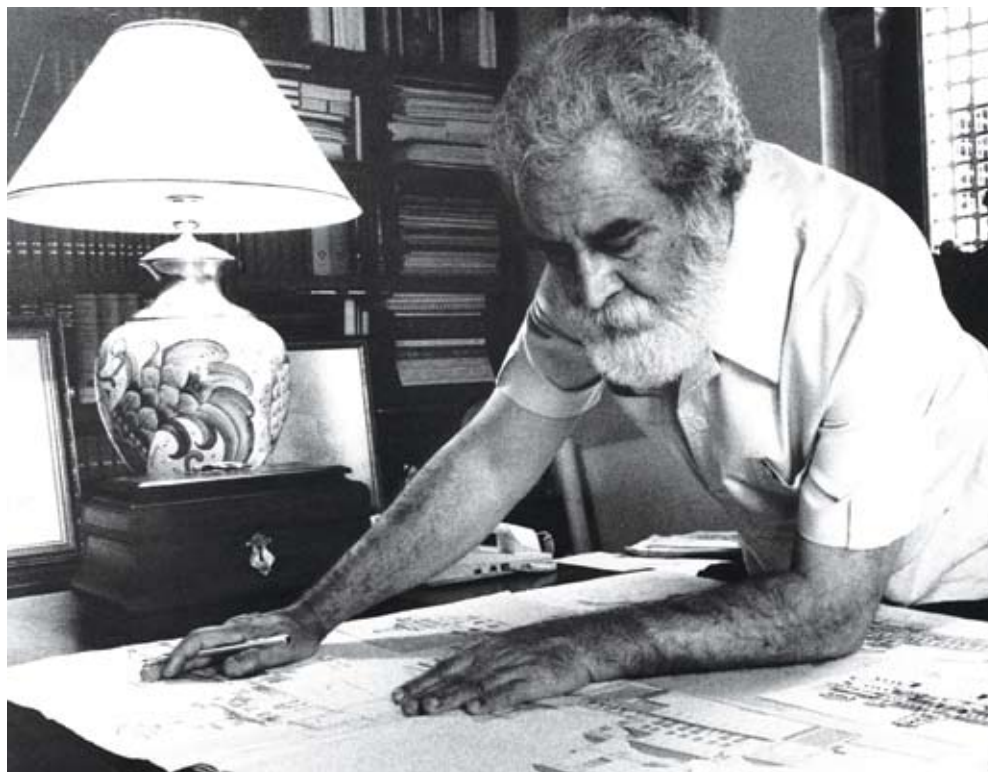
Since 1974, Marquis Who's Who in the World has listed Tan Sri Syed Naquib among individuals who have demonstrated outstanding achievements in their own field of endeavor. As an internationally recognised scholar, he has delivered more than 400 lectures throughout Europe, the United States, Japan, the Far East and the Muslim world. Tan Sri Syed Naquib has written 30 books and many articles on Islam in the fields of Islamic philosophy, theology and metaphysics, history, literature, art and civilisation, religion and education. Some of his works

written in English and Malay have been translated into Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Urdu, Punjabi, French, German, Italian, Russian, Bosnian, Albanian, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Malayalam and Indonesian. He is the only scholar in Malaysia who has been awarded the honor of occupying academic chairs in various disciplines.

Tan Sri Syed Naquib's work has received international recognition and he is at present listed as the 500 most influential Muslims in the world by The Royal Islamic Strategic Studies Centre report (2010). In 1975, he was conferred Fellow of the Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy for outstanding contribution in the field of comparative philosophy. From 1976-

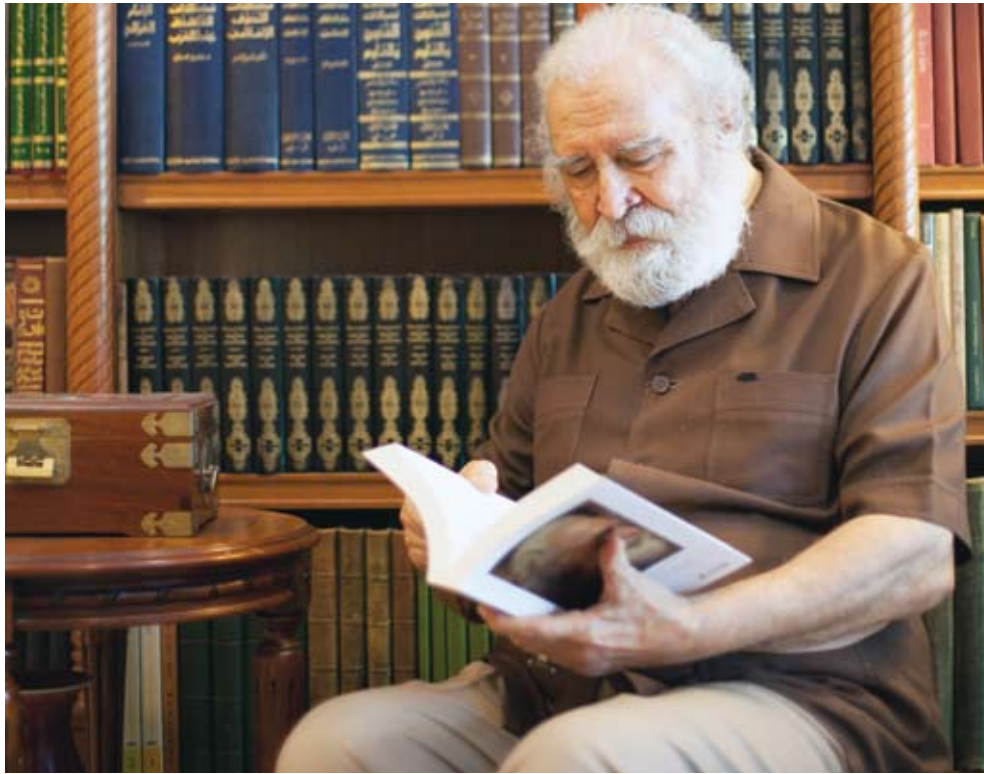
77, he was a Visiting Professor of Islam at Temple University, Philadelphia, United States. In 1979 the President of Pakistan, General Muhammad Zia ul-Haq, conferred upon him the Iqbal Centenary Commemorative Medal. He was also the first holder of the Tun Abdul Razak Chair of Southeast Asian Studies at Ohio University, U.S.A. (1980-82).

For his creative and scholarly contributions to the contemporary Muslim world, Tan Sri Syed Naquib has been internationally honoured including as a Member of the Royal Academy of Jordan (1994). The University of Khartoum conferred upon him the Degree of Honorary Doctorate of Arts (D. Litt.) in June 1995. The



Reviewing drawings for the new ISTAC buildings, 1996



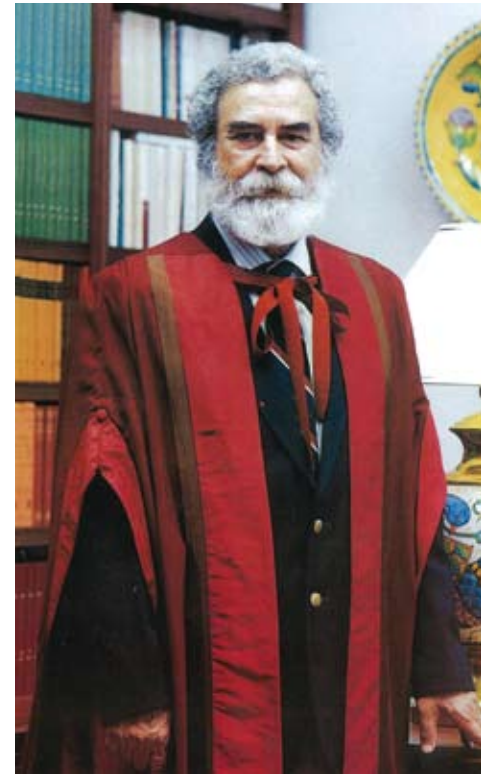


Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), through its subsidiary, the Research Centre for Islamic History, Art and Culture (IRCICA) conferred upon him the IRCICA Award for excellent contributions in the various fields of Islamic civilization (2000); The Russian Academy of Sciences honoured him in a Special Presentation to the Academicians, Moscow (2001); The Iranian Government, through its Society for the Appreciation of Cultural Works and Dignitaries, conferred upon him a special Award of Recognition (2002).

Also in 2002 The Cranlana Programme in Australia has listed him among its scholars (a list which includes Jean-Paul Sartre, Amartya Sen and Martin Luther-King) having powerful ideas

and perspectives on the good society, acknowledging him as the first scholar in contemporary times to formulate a comprehensive concept of the Islamic university. The Cranlana Programme acknowledges powerful ideas from the classical period, the Renaissance, the nineteenth century and up to contemporary times.

Tan Sri Syed Naquib has also made significant contribution to the history and origin of the modern Malay language. He discovered and published his research on the oldest Malay manuscript, and solved the riddle of the correct arrangement of the Malay-Islamic cyclical calendar. He is the first scholar to discover and establish the correct date of the Trengganu Inscription. His works are referred to



As Founder-Director of ISTAC, on the occasion of the conferment of the Al-Ghazali Chair of Islamic Thought, 1993

by scholars today, especially regarding Malay language studies, and Islamic studies, throughout the world. He is well recognised by Malay historians due to his contribution in formulating the general theory of Islamisation in the Malay-Indonesia Archipelago.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Tan Sri Syed Naquib is among the most outstanding and multi-faceted Muslim thinkers in the contemporary world. He is the author of authoritative works on various aspects of Islamic thought and civilisation, particularly on Sufism, cosmology, metaphysics, philosophy and Malay language and literature.

At age 81, he remains passionate about his pursuits and is still an active contributor in enhancing Islamic scholarship and understanding. His most recent published work dealing with historical fact and fiction gives new solutions to problems of historical interpretation and explanation in the history of Islam in Southeast Asia. He is currently writing a book on various aspects of Justice. Tan Sri Syed Naquib is Member of the Advisory Board of al-Hikma Islamic Translation Series, the Institute of Global Cultural Studies, Binghamton University, SUNY, Brigham Young University; a Member of the Advisory Board of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research, Encyclopedia of Arab Islamic Civilization, Amman, Jordan; and a member of the Assembly of the Parliament of Cultures, International Cultures Foundation, Turkey.

Tan Sri Syed Naquib is a distinguished and foremost thinker, philosopher and educator in the Muslim world. He is among the few contemporary scholars who is thoroughly rooted in the traditional Islamic sciences, being a competent master in theology, philosophy, metaphysics, history, and literature—truly reflecting the Spirit of Merdeka that personifies thought leadership and innovation.



At Windsor Castle, October 1999



With King Hussein of Jordan in Amman, 1978

# Outstanding Contribution to the People of Malaysia

Awarded to a citizen of any nationality and/or foreign  
organisation to honour substantial contribution to  
Malaysia or to the lives of Malaysians.





DR ENGGIK SOEPADMO

# PROFILE

Dr Engkik Soepadmo was born on 13 March 1937 in Kartosuro, Surakarta, Central Java, Indonesia. He showed a keen interest in ecology from an early age, “Being born and brought up in a *kampung* environment, it was a natural thing to do for children like myself to be curious, observant and become well acquainted with all sorts of trees and other plants growing around our houses, in the orchards, along narrow and winding streets and river banks, and sprawling paddy fields and vegetable gardens,” he says.

He received his early education at the Secondary School in Solo. Following his graduation from High School in 1955, Dr Soepadmo was selected as one of 30 successful candidates to undergo intensive undergraduate training at the College of Biology in Bogor. He graduated from the College of Biology in 1959 with a Bachelor Degree in Taxonomic Botany. “It was from the beginning of my college education in Bogor that I was drilled by my lecturers and mentors on the importance and significance of understanding plant diversity, structure and functioning as well as conservation of the forest ecosystem in maintaining and sustaining ecological balance of human environment,” he adds.

Following a stint as a junior botanist at the Herbarium Bogoriense in Bogor, Dr Soepadmo was offered a Colombo Plan Fellowship to do postgraduate studies at the University of Cambridge, UK, where he obtained his PhD in July 1966. This was followed by a two year research fellowship from the University of Leiden in the Netherlands.



Examining preserved plant specimens at the KEP Herbarium of the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM)



Dr Soepadmo first came to Malaysia in 1968 when he was appointed as a lecturer in Tropical Botany at the University of Malaya. He later became an Associate Professor at the Department of Botany in 1975. Soon after, he was appointed as the Professor of Ecology at the same University. “After considering all aspects of my future, I became thoroughly convinced that Malaysia was the right place to further my academic career,” he says. During his tenure at the University of Malaya, Dr Soepadmo developed, managed and implemented various basic and applied botanical and ecological courses relevant to the training and development of young scientists capable of tackling various scientific and managerial issues pertinent to the conservation and sustainable use of tropical forest biological resources.

Dr Soepadmo’s main interest and research activity over the past 48 years (1963–2011) has focused on species diversity, complex structure and ecological functioning of tropical rainforest in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia. Through detailed botanical and ecological studies of selected tree species (trees being the major component of tropical rainforests) complemented with extensive field work, he has shown that the tropical rainforest of Southeast Asia plays a vital role in the maintenance of ecological balance and environment stability of its surrounding areas.

Dr Soepadmo has published more than 100 papers in internationally refereed journals, books and research materials. His earlier major contributions in the



Examining detailed microscopic characteristics of plant specimens under highpowered compound microscope

survey and documentation of tree species diversity in Southeast Asia are in the form of monographs of the Fagaceae (oak and chestnut family) and Ulmaceae (elm family), published in the Flora Malesiana Ser. 1, volume 7, 2 (1972) and 8, 2 (1977), respectively. The seven volumes of the Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak (1995–2011) that he edited and authored contain detailed botanical and ecological accounts of 2,165 tree species native to Sabah and Sarawak, among which 946 are endemic and 267 new to science. In his botanical and floristic work, Dr Soepadmo has so far discovered, described and documented 56 species of tropical trees new to science. He has also edited and contributed towards the compilation and publication of “The Encyclopedia of Malaysia: Plants”, published by The Archipelago Press in 1998.

Dr Soepadmo has also been actively

involved in the negotiation, formulation, planning and establishment of regional and international collaborative research and training programmes with well-established overseas botanical and other research institutions having interest in tropical forest biodiversity. He has also contributed scientific data pertaining to the botany, ecology and conservation status of Malaysian aromatic, medicinal, ornamental, timber and wild fruit tree species.

The result of his collaborative research project on nectar-feeding bats has highlighted and established the mutual interdependence and close link between the bats and a number of trees growing in the mixed dipterocarp forest, mangrove forest, limestone hills (dark caves) and fruit orchard in villages. The link of the bats, mangroves and the fireflies have also been used by his colleague at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia



(FRIM) to detect and mitigate the decline of the firefly colony due to the pollution of Sungai Selangor which was causing the death of beremban trees in Kuala Selangor. Beremban trees are not only the firefly colony's mating grounds but also the feeding grounds of the nectar-feeding bats.

In recognising his contribution towards enhancing our knowledge of the Flora and Plant Biodiversity of the Southeast Asia region, his peers have named six species of plants after him:

- *Actinodaphne soepadmoi* Julia (Lauraceae)
- *Aglaia soepadmoi* C.M. Pannell (Meliaceae)
- *Cinnamomum soepadmoi* Kostermans (Lauraceae)
- *Ficus soepadmoi* Kochummen (Moraceae)
- *Syzygium soepadmoi* P.S. Ashton (Myrtaceae)
- *Vatica soepadmoi* P.S. Ashton (Dipterocarpaceae)

As the Coordinator and Chief Editor of the Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak Project at FRIM, Dr Soepadmo has been directly involved in guiding and upgrading the research and managerial capability of more than 30 young Malaysian research officers attached to FRIM, Forest Department of Sabah, and Forest Department of Sarawak. The Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak Project was judged as the best research project by the FRIM Board in 1996 and 2007.

In 2009, Dr Soepadmo was nominated by FRIM as a candidate for the prestigious Blue Planet Prize which recognises



Collecting plant specimens in the forest

outstanding efforts in scientific research or applications of science that contribute to solving global environmental problems. At the same time, the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) awarded Dr Soepadmo Honorary Life Membership to recognise outstanding individuals for their significant and meaningful contribution to the Malaysian Nature Society and their study of Malaysia's natural heritage.

Dr Soepadmo has also made significant contribution towards the research collaboration, establishment, management and implementation of a number of key projects including:

- The Malaysian International Biological Programme (IBP) for the study of tropical rainforest at the Pasoh FR, Negeri Sembilan involving over 70 Malaysian, Japanese and British scientists (1970–1974);

- Research and training collaboration on the reproductive biology and population dynamics of tropical forest trees between scientists of the University of Malaya, University of Aberdeen, Scotland, UK and the Harvard University, USA (1975–1985);
- Mangrove Research and Management Project in Southeast Asia involving scientists from Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines, Papua New Guinea and Australia (1976–1980);
- Network of long-term ecological research on population dynamics of tropical rainforest between scientists from Malaysia, Japan, United Kingdom and USA (1978–1993);
- Botanical Inventory of Southeast Asian (Malesian) Floras involving botanists from Southeast Asia, Australia, Europe and USA (1966–Present).



Group photograph of international postgraduate students in 1965 of the Botany School, University of Cambridge. Dr Soepadmo sitting at the right



Dr Soepadmo posing in front of the Senate Building, University of Cambridge after receiving his Ph.D in July 1966

Dr Soepadmo has also been actively involved in the establishment of Protected Forest Areas in Malaysia including:

- 1970–1985: 50 hectares Ecological Plots for long-term studies at Pasoh FR (Peninsular Malaysia) and Lambir NP (Sarawak), (as a member of the International Selection Panel and a leader of initial botanical explorations);
- 1985–1986 & 1989–1990: The Endau-Rompin State Parks in Johor and Pahang (as researcher and contributor of scientific papers);
- 1993–1994: The Royal Belum State Park in Perak (Peninsular Malaysia; as scientific expedition leader and co-editor of scientific publications);
- 1994–1995: The Bukit Tawai Protection Forest Reserve (Sabah; as researcher and leader of botanical expedition);
- 1997–2000: The Lanjak-Entimau/ Betung Kerihun Transboundary Conservation Area (Malaysia-Indonesia; as researcher and co-editor of scientific publications);
- 2007–Present: Pulong Tau NP (Sarawak; as leader and/or advisor of botanical exploration).

## CONCLUDING REMARKS:

Dr Soepadmo is the foremost authority on Malaysia's forest plant diversity. His research plays an important role in the future of Malaysia's rich plant heritage and its dependence on the delicate balance between conservation and the sustainable exploitation and management of forest resources.

He has emphasised that enormous amount of concerted endeavor by all

concerned in the form of multi and inter-disciplinary basic and applied scientific research, development of indigenous expertise, conservation and wise usage of biological resources, are of paramount importance to optimally harvest the goods and services offered by the tropical forests of the region.

Dr Soepadmo is an outstanding botanist and ecologist who has made significant contribution to the research and conservation of Malaysia's forest plant diversity. His wide-ranging work has had significant impact on Malaysia and Malaysians and truly embodies the *Spirit of Merdeka*.



# Merdeka Award Past Recipients

2008

## EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

**Royal Professor Ungku Abdul Aziz  
bin Ungku Abdul Hamid**

*For outstanding contribution to the eradication of poverty, rural economics, the development of Tabung Haji and in the field of education*

## ENVIRONMENT

**Malaysian Nature Society (MNS)**

*For outstanding contribution to the Belum-Temenggor Forest Complex Conservation Initiative.*

## HEALTH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Nipah Virus Encephalitis Investigation Team from The  
Faculty of Medicine, University of Malaya**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution to the discovery and understanding of the causes, effects and control of the Nipah encephalitis viral infection*

&

**Professor Dato' Dr Khalid Kadir**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution to the study and understanding of diabetes and the relationship between hormones and stresses in various tissues*

## OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA

**Datuk Leslie Davidson**

*For outstanding contribution in the introduction of the pollinating insects *Elaeidobius kamerunicus* from Africa to the oil palm and plantations in Malaysia, leading to the rapid development of the palm oil industry.*

2009

## EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

**Tun Fatimah Hashim**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution to the empowerment of women in Malaysia and for protecting and securing economic opportunities for women through advocacy*

&

**Tan Sri Dato' Lim Phaik Gan**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution to the empowerment of women in Malaysia and for protecting and securing rights and economic opportunities for women through advocacy*

## HEALTH, SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

**Professor Datuk Dr Halimaton Hamdan**

*For outstanding contribution in the development and application of Maerogel as a commercially viable multi-purpose material*

## OUTSTANDING SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT

**Professor Dato' Ir Dr Zaini Ujang**

*For outstanding study and scholarly contributions in the various environmental initiatives concerning water supply, sewage, river rehabilitation and industrial ecology*

2010

**EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY**

**Datin Paduka Mother A Mangalam**

**A/P S Iyaswamy Iyer**

*For outstanding contribution in promoting the welfare of the underprivileged and for fostering national unity*

**OUTSTANDING SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**Professor Emeritus Dr Yong Hoi Sen**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution to the development of basic and applied knowledge of Genetics, Molecular Biology, Biological Systematics, Evolutionary Biology and Biological Diversity of Malaysian flora and fauna*

**&**

**Professor Dr Harith Ahmad**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution in research and promoting the development of photonics in Malaysia*

**OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE PEOPLE OF MALAYSIA**

**Tan Sri Just Faaland**

*For outstanding contribution to the advocacy of equitable growth through eradication of poverty and reduction of socio-economic polarisation*

2011

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Dato' Dr Kenneth Yeang**

*For outstanding contribution to the development of design methods for the ecological design and planning of the built environment*

**OUTSTANDING SCHOLASTIC ACHIEVEMENT**

**Professor Dato' Dr Goh Khean Lee**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding contribution in elevating the study and practice of gastroenterology and hepatology in Malaysia to global standards*

**&**

**Professor Dr Mak Joon Wah**

(Joint Recipient)

*For outstanding fundamental and applied research in parasitology and parasitic diseases, public health and pathology*





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Professor Tan Sri Dato' Dzulkifli Abdul Razak

Professor Dr Harith Ahmad

Professor Emeritus Dr Yong Hoi Sen

#### *Outstanding Contribution to the People of Malaysia*

Mr Kamal Malhotra

Datuk Dr Paddy Bowie

Tunku Dato' Ya'acob Tunku Tan Sri Abdullah





# Merdeka Award Website



Five years since it was set-up, the Merdeka Award has firmly established itself as the nation's premiere award of excellence, recognising the talent and contributions of an outstanding group of individuals and organisations.

In line with its growth and evolution, the Merdeka Award, in 2012, launched a brand new website, featuring more comprehensive and engaging content, designed to offer visitors, especially younger Malaysians, a more interactive opportunity to engage with the Merdeka Award.

The Merdeka Award's new website at [www.merdekaaward.my](http://www.merdekaaward.my) went live on April 24, 2012, in conjunction with the launch of two of the Merdeka Award's signature programmes -- the call for entry for the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment and the broadcast of the 3rd Merdeka Award Roundtable.

The vibrant website provides comprehensive and up-to-date information on the Merdeka Award's history and philosophy, the Award categories as well as the stringent Nomination and Selection processes. There are detailed profiles on all

recipients and their achievements since the award was first launched in 2007, as well as an archive of media materials and a media centre.

The website also provides information on the Merdeka Award's signature programmes, with YouTube links to the Merdeka Award Roundtables, a series of TV talk-shows designed to inspire debate and discussion on key issues of interest to Malaysians. The shows are produced in partnership with broadcaster ASTRO Awani. The Merdeka Award has hosted four Roundtables to date, with the fourth scheduled for broadcast in December 2012.

The Merdeka Award's second signature programme, the Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment, is designed to make it possible for qualified Malaysians, between the ages 22–35, to engage in short-term collaborative projects or programmes at a selected, internationally-recognised host institution. This is designed to help the recipient build on his or her expertise by undergoing a learning experience in an institution or organisation of international repute, and improving the recipient's body of work and achievements.

The recipient will also have the opportunity to establish contact and working relationships with other experts in the field.

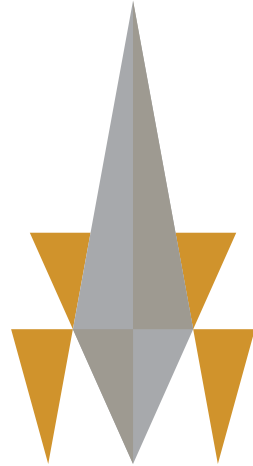
Applications for the Merdeka Award Grant were done online through the Merdeka Award website with numerous high quality applications received. The Merdeka Award Grant for International Attachment recipient will be announced in early 2013, once the Grant Selection Committee and Merdeka Award Board of Trustees make the final decision.

The Merdeka Award website is designed to act as an anchor to all the Merdeka Award programmes and initiatives, as well as an interactive tool for Malaysians, and those outside Malaysia, to find out more about the Merdeka Award and its programmes, check out the new Merdeka Award website at [www.merdekaaward.my](http://www.merdekaaward.my)





## The Logo and Trophy



M E R D E K A  
A W A R D



Designed by Dato' Johan Ariff, the trophy is a three dimensional version of the Merdeka Award logo. It expresses convergence and ascension, the same qualities celebrated in the achievements of the Merdeka Awards winners. The trophy also represents environmental concerns in the form of a plant shoot *Rebung*, transparency, ethics, and the glorious five decades of Malaysian independence.



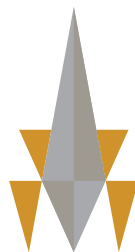
## An Artistic Vision of Excellence



This Latiff Mohidin sculpture incorporates the kinetic element of a rotating ball symbolising freedom. The sculpture rests on a granite base denoting strength and fortitude. The piece also incorporates the traditional elements of *Sulur Bayur* underscoring heritage and *Pucuk Rebung* signifying excellence.







MERDEKA  
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