

**NEWS**20
Shares

Best of Malaysianskini 2020

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MALAYSIANSKINI | Since it first kicked off in May 2015, the Malaysianskini feature segment has undergone a number of changes.

Initially mooted as a focus on up-and-coming stars of the Malaysian socio-political scene (which included a future minister in Syed Saddiq Syed Abdul Rahman), it soon expanded to cover interviews with Malaysians from all walks of life who have fascinating stories to share.

The format has changed too, from a weekly column that ran every Sunday to a more ad hoc collection of articles. But the theme – "a series on Malaysians you should know" – has remained constant.

2020 has been a particularly challenging year but a range of personalities from Huzir Sulaiman and Ramli Ibrahim, Batu Kawan MP Kasthuri Patto and former *angkasawan* (astronaut) finalist Vanajah Siva have been among those who took the time to share their stories with us.

In no particular order, here are eight of the very best Malaysianskini pieces from 2020:

Coming back from the brink of hell

By Faisal Asyraf

Ang Tan Loong is the successful founder of a thriving pest control company, soft-spoken, approachable and humble.

Meeting the friendly gentleman, one would never guess that he was once a prisoner, a long-term drug addict and a hot-tempered and occasionally violent triad member.

Ang shares his recovery from the brink of disaster and how at his lowest ebb – contracting a disease during solitary confinement while serving a jail term – he could never have imagined bouncing back.

But entering a drug rehabilitation centre really helped him turn his life around, and step by step, he rebuilt his life.

Fighting for respect in the shadow of the frontlines

By Fion Yap

Rita Santaran has taken up the fight for hospital cleaners who perform a crucial role, particularly during the Covid-19 pandemic, but who have very few rights and benefits.

A former chairperson of a hospital cleaners' union in Perak and a single mother with four children, Rita raised a whole family with a monthly wage of around RM1,000 (after deductions).



She helped form a workers union to defend her rights and those of her colleagues.

But this provoked a hostile reaction from her employers.

Overcoming stigma so that she can 'speak' for the deaf

By Alyaa Alhadjri

Growing up as a child who could hear in a deaf household, it didn't take long for Goh Soo Leng to find herself in the role of an unofficial interpreter for her parents.

In her early years, Goh admitted to being embarrassed about her parents' condition, and she kept it a secret not only from friends at school but also from all of the teachers.

She eventually overcame those feelings and joined the Kuala Lumpur Society of the Deaf in 2000 at the age of 21, both as a volunteer and to enrol in a class that taught the Malaysian sign language.

After two years of volunteering, Goh formally signed-up to work as a full-time interpreter at the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf (MFD), a job

which she dearly loves and has held on to until today.

[From humble beginnings to USM's first Orang Asli dean](#)

By Martin Vengadesan

Prof Bahari Belaton has come a long way from the boy who was born in the late 1960s in an Orang Asli village in Perak's Kinta District and who lost his father and most of his seven siblings at a tender age.



Now a father of four himself, Bahari has never forgotten how his mother struggled to earn a living to provide for her two surviving children.

He recalled how he overcame bullying and used it to make himself stronger.

Back in the 1980s, he barely knew about computers when he applied to be in a pioneer batch of trainees and went on to further his studies in South Australia.

[Keeping the Papia Kristang flag flying](#)

By Geraldine Tong

Philomena Agnes Singho is determined to ensure the language of the Malaccan Portuguese community not only survives but flourishes.

Its unique creole language is known by many names but is mostly referred to as the Papia Kristang language.

With only about 2,000 fluent speakers of Kristang remaining worldwide, 66-year-old Singho has worked on various initiatives with the Malaccan Portuguese-Eurasian association in collaboration with Universiti Malaya (UM) to help promote the language.

This included publishing a book titled "Beng Prende Portugues Malaka" (Come, Let's Learn Portuguese Malacca) on Kristang as well as an online dictionary of the language "BibePortMal" available as a mobile app.

Fighting the factories' fearsome fumes

By Low Choon Chyuan

Pua Lay Peng is a representative of the Kuala Langat Environmental Action Association and she's fighting a fearsome battle.



At the end of 2017, Pua and several residents found there were several illegal recycling factories operating secretly in their neighbourhood.

Gathering evidence at night, they managed to identify no less than 48 factories that were involved.

After she became known as an activist, Pua's elder sister suffered a brazen "red paint" attack outside her house in Jenjarom and she believed this was a "warning" from the illegal operators.

[The PJ girl who just penned Disney's next movie](#)

By Martin Vengadesan

Adele Lim has gone from precocious columnist with *The Star's* Youth section in the 1990s to cut her teeth on global hit television shows like *Xena: Warrior Princess*, *One Tree Hill*, and *Private Practice*.

She co-wrote the screenplay for the 2018 hit *Crazy Rich Asians* which starred Constance Wu, Henry Golding and Michelle Yeoh and made US\$238 million (RM988 million) at the box office on a budget of US\$30 million.

However, Lim walked out on the sequel in protest of the gender pay gap after learning she would be paid a mere eighth of what her male co-writer Peter Chiarelli stood to make.



Luckily, she landed another exciting project – co-writing Walt Disney Animation Studios' 59th animated feature film, *Raya and the Last Dragon*.

[How teacher Dinnie makes award-winning films in rural Sarawak](#)

By Annabelle Lee

Wan Zulfadli Ad-Dinnie Wan Azmi's day job is as an art and physical education teacher at Sekolah Kebangsaan Temong, a rural primary school in Serian, Sarawak.



After school hours, he makes films with and of his students, with a focus on a unique animation technique called rotoscoping.

Cikgu Dinnie, as his students call him, recently made headlines for "B.B. - Batuh Bijanji". This animated short film won "Best Film by Popular Jury" at a Brazilian film festival for student work.

He uses his projects to simultaneously pay homage to his favourite films and genres and also to empower his students, who otherwise would have little exposure to filmmaking.

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