

Keen to help set up a Sabah Technology Research Park

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DE: Was there pressure to do some other discipline like medicine, etc?

A: My dad, being an accountant, he would but in a very non-direct way but he never forced us to do something we did not want.

DE: How about your childhood in Sabah?

A: My parents were very supportive and I was lucky to have supportive extended families like an uncle who was instrumental in me getting my PhD at Carnegie Mellon. Getting my PhD was extremely challenging. My grandmother taught us the importance of education at a very young age. I always observed as a child where, no matter how busy, she would read the Bible at the end of the day. My time in Maktab Sabah also made me who I am today. If it weren't for my teachers and friends who supported and believed in me, I would not have had the confidence to reach greater heights.

I also received much support from my wife and kids. She is from Ranau. She's studying and taking care of our three children. She did a three-year Diploma in Aerospace Engineering at UTM. We thought it would be easy for her to just continue but US did not recognise her Mara cert. So she had to start from scratch.

DE: How long were you in Carnegie Mellon?

A: I studied there for 10 years starting with my Bachelor's in Electrical and Computer Engineering. My first Masters was also in Electrical and Computer Engineering while my second Masters was in Information Systems Management. I then took a two-year break to enter industry by working for Oracle Corporation and in 2008 went back to Carnegie Mellon to do my PhD.

DE: You are determined to come back one day to serve Sabah.

A: Yes, Sabah has always been home to me. I was the first and only Sabahan to get an Agong scholarship and am grateful for the opportunity. It was very competitive and an intense selection process where I had to compete with university lecturers. That gave me the opportunity to do what I did. Sabahans have lots of potential and if given the opportunity, they can shine. The PhD at Carnegie

Mellon was incredibly challenging but I was grateful to be given the opportunity to demonstrate what Sabahans are capable of. That is why I would like to come back to set up an institute that specialises in this field (Big Data) so that Sabahans can also have the opportunity that I had. It is one of my aims. I am going back to Oracle but am in discussion with several universities like MMU and UUM on setting up a lab on Big Data. Also with the MITDC on doing research or bringing back key technologies.

DE: How about Sabah's own UMS?

A: I would love to teach there but given the choice I would like to set up the institute.

DE: Being a Muslim, and especially after 911, has it been difficult for you to assimilate in this technologically-sensitive industry in the US? Were there fears that the Al-Qaeda may try to entice you for your expertise in Big Data?

A: Actually, no. My interview in Oracle only lasted two minutes. It was by the Vice President who reports to the CEO directly. It was when I had finished my bachelors and two Masters in four-and-a-half years. He was surprised at this and asked where I was from. When I said 'Malaysia' immediately his face changed and he said 'Faisal you can work in any camp but I want it to be in Oracle. The next day I got a call and received First Class tickets to go to California. They gave me an offer on the spot to work with any team that I wanted. My race, religion or colour of my skin...none of that mattered.

DE: Your position in Oracle says 'Project Lead'. Does that mean you head a division there?

A: The group I'm working with has 800 people. Within the oracle crowd there private cloud management, Big Data, etc. Project Lead means if there are any questions within the team, I'm the person they will be looking for.

DE: Can you elaborate on the various cloud managements?

A: There are two types of clouds - private and public. Private cloud is for enterprises, meaning any company can have their data in a cloud and this is normally protected within the company itself. For public cloud, analysis or similar to Amazon public cloud where anyone can create information in the cloud.

First rule to sustainable devt: Listen to people

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First phase - the baseline survey under the Preparatory stage.

"The baseline survey taps into the voice of the people," Suzuki explained.

"We should listen carefully to the local voice and then together with the local community, work out how to implement this pilot project," Suzuki said.

The idea?

"First, before we start doing anything, we must do this baseline survey to clarify the relationship between the people of Kg Tudan and nature," Suzuki said.

"Before we touch anything, we have to understand the current environmental and social-economic situation - how the local community depend on the environment for their livelihood, how they enjoy the harmonisation between human and nature," Suzuki noted.

"The expected outputs of this Preparatory stage, implemented between January and May, include:

- Household demographic (human population by household)
- Livelihood sources
- Food consumption pattern
- Material flow etc

"The idea is to use these baseline study results to develop the basis for community-based conservation at Kg Tudan," Suzuki said.

"In line with the baseline survey, Jica-SDBEC will work together with other relevant organisations to do three things:

- One, training for extension staff on Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

Training needed to improve relationship with the environment

"To improve livelihood, and human relationship with their environments, capacity building for local human resources is indispensable," Suzuki said.

"One need is training on communication skills where a people-oriented and a participatory approach is crucial to enable extension staff to communicate better with local community to ensure the success of local-based activities," he explained.

"At the moment, it is the duty of extension staff to promote and deliver

any new initiative from the Department of Agriculture meant to improve local community livelihood and so bridging the gap between the extension staff and the community is the way forward to ensure the smooth delivery of information," Suzuki said.

Secondly, we'll push an awareness and education program to move the project upward and forward, he added

The imperatives - communication, awareness and soil science

"We believe communication, education and public awareness (Cepa) are imperative and it is through Cepa that the current environmental condition at Kg Tudan in terms of the physical, biological and chemical aspects, will be clarified. We also want the importance of integration between the upstream and downstream of the river basin is thoroughly understood by the community of Kg Tudan," Suzuki elaborated.

Thirdly, in line with the Preparatory stage, we'll do soil survey to give us a science-based information on the soil in Kg Tudan," Suzuki said.

"The Department of Agriculture is now doing this soil survey. The result will contribute to developing a Soil-Crop Suitability Map which can be a basis or formulating future policy and implementation of the soil crop suitability evaluation."

Consultation and participation

The Consultation Phase which runs between May and November 2014 is designed to develop the Participatory 3 Dimensional Model (P3DM), based on the work at the Preparatory stage, Suzuki said.

"Here, we'll do a series of bottom-up discussions with the people and seek their ideas about land and nature because the focus is on the community. Without their participation at the grassroots level, we can't do anything in implementing the outputs," he asserted.

"From these discussions, we identify the natural resources, land use condition and the relationship between people and nature for us to develop a Conservation and Development Plan." Suzuki said.

"The merit of the Participatory 3-Dimensional Model is that it can promote active participation of the community who can also understand easily the outputs of this method," Suzuki explained.

"The expected outputs of this P3DM include a Village Profile, Community Profile, Maps such as a Community Map, a Resources Map and a Land Use Map, a Community Season Calendar, video etc," Suzuki said.

Integrated approach a must

Finally, the Integration stage when Suzuki and his team will pour over reports of the baseline survey from the Preparatory stage and Consultation stage for information to develop the draft management plan with a variety of feasible recommendations for realising the mutual benefits of conservation and human wellbeing or livelihood improvement for a future community living in harmony with nature in Kg Tudan.

A future quest where man and nature co-exist pays off financially

A future community living in harmony with nature could include turning a well balanced Kg Tudan into an attractive homestay and ecotourism hotspot where tourists can see, feel and taste the beauty of Sabah.

"I think there is much potential for this in terms of natural resources and human resources," Suzuki said.

Not only that, if the Kg Tudan folks are managing, conserving nature and protecting their forests and the water is very clean, it paves the way to a possibility of selling bottled water produced in Kg Tudan to city folks one day and a portion of the profits from this production can be pumped into a fund at the local level for the local community to manage and protect water.

"This is the kind of market-based mechanism which I would call payment for ecosystem services," Suzuki said.

"It has been done in Costa Rica, Australia, Japan, Europe but not yet in Malaysia," Suzuki added. - **Kan Yaw Chong**

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