



newsletter

Institute for Medical Research

Issued :
01/2020



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IMR DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

As we settle into the New Year with our plans firmly in place, we are facing the biggest global health challenge with the COVID-19 pandemic. We are proud to highlight that IMR is in the forefront of the COVID-19 preparedness and response in Malaysia. IMR was privileged to receive a visit from YB Dato' Sri Dr. Adham Baba, the Minister of Health Malaysia to our diagnostic laboratory. YB Minister of Health acknowledged the excellent work carried out by IMR, in creating and optimizing the RT-PCR test and enhancing COVID-19 testing capacity in Malaysia. I would like to congratulate all IMR staff especially the Virology team who have contributed in battling the COVID-19 pandemic.

IMR managed to conduct several exciting activities early this year. These include the Antibiotic Fun Run which was a great success to create awareness on drug-resistance due to overuse of antibiotics. In addition, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Malaysian Stem Cell Registry (MSCR) was signed between IMR and National Cancer Council Malaysia (MAKNA) on 10 Feb 2020.

A MoU was also inked between IMR and Aquaria KLCC which resulted in an exhibition on the Rodent Specimens from IMR Biomedical Museum at Aquaria KLCC from January to March 2020. This coincides with the Chinese Zodiac of the Rat for the 2020 Lunar New Year.

The Covid-19 pandemic has reminded us of the challenges that we will need to face in the future and the new norms that need to be adhered to. With this in mind, it's my belief that IMR will remain resilient and continuously able to cope to the challenging demands in the future. With the full commitment and dedication from everyone, we will overcome the COVID-19 outbreak in our country. Once again I thank everyone for their excellent work and support.

“

IMR managed to conduct several exciting activities early this year

”

Dr. Hj Tahir Aris

Director
Institute for Medical Research (IMR)
31st March 2020

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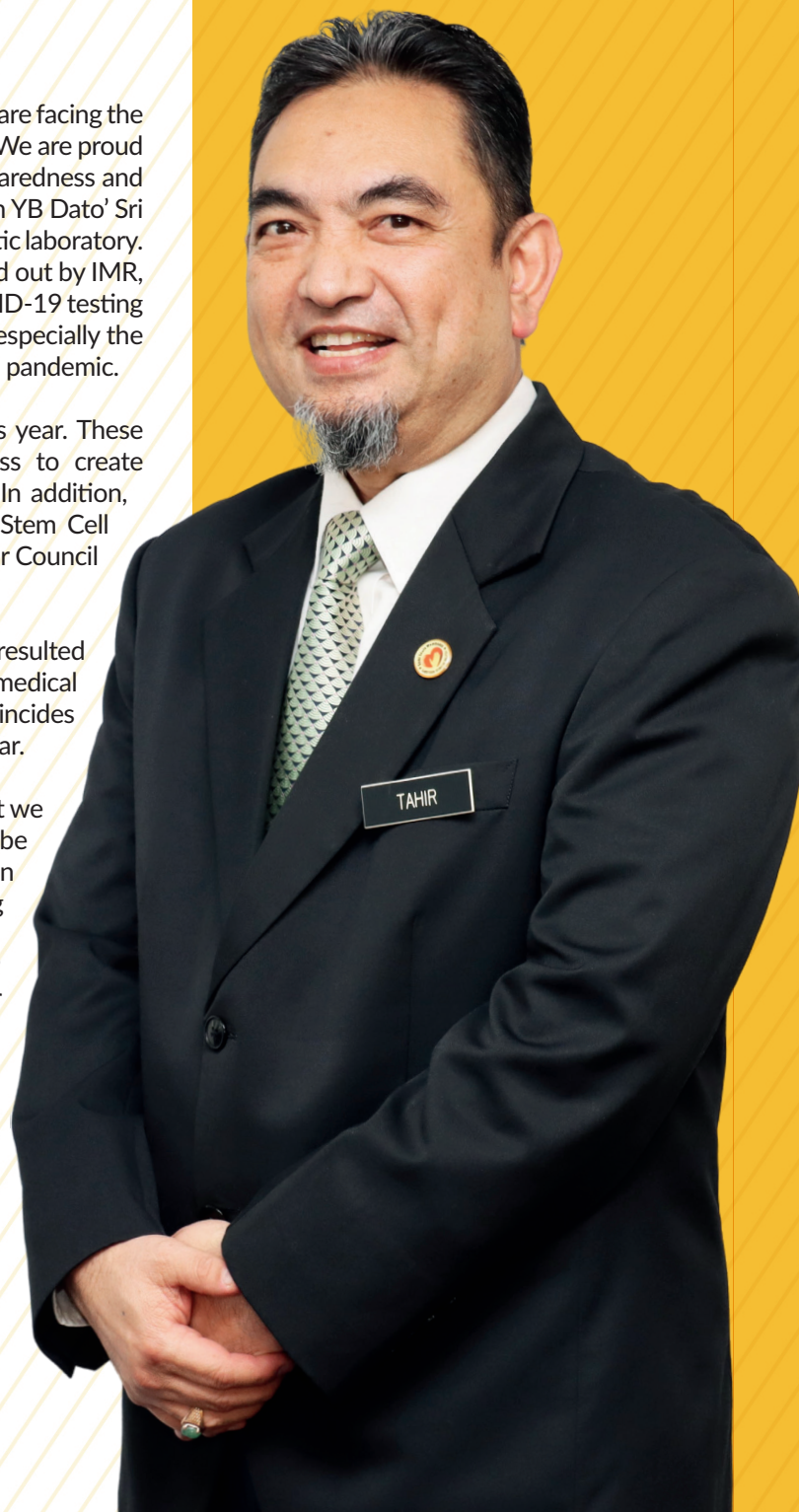
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CO-EDITOR-IN-CHIEF MESSAGE

Greetings,

It gives me great pleasure to present to you the first edition of IMR Newsletter for 2020. In this issue, we are proud of the various achievements and momentous events in IMR for the first quarter of 2020.

2020 has been a challenging year for all when the COVID-19 pandemic affected the world. IMR as the leading national biomedical research institution in Malaysia and therefore the reference laboratory for COVID-19 test has played a critical role in safeguarding the health of our people and is in the forefront for the war against COVID-19. Apart from this, activities such as signing of the MoU with MAKNA and Aquaria KLCC, receiving funds from PNB for organ transplant immunological testing and participating in the Antibiotics Fun Run had made the first quarter of 2020 an eventful one.

I wish to congratulate IMR staff for their achievements and contributions in making this publication a success.

Mr. Lim Kuang Hock

Head of Biomedical Museum Unit,
Special Resource Centre (SRC)

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Congratulation...

A WARM WELCOME AND HEARTIEST CONGRATULATION TO DR HJ TAHIR BIN ARIS FOR HIS APPOINTMENT AS THE DIRECTOR OF IMR

We are proud to welcome Dr. Haji Tahir bin Aris for his appointment as the 31st Director of IMR, effective 3rd February 2020.

Dr. Tahir obtained his medical degree in 1989 and completed his Master of Public Health (Occupational Health) in 1994 in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). As a Public Health Specialist, he was involved in numerous projects especially in Survey Research since 1995, developing his expertise in Research Methodology and Medical Statistics. He was appointed as the Director of the Institute for Public Health in January 2010. He has contributed in multiple national surveys and studies, leading towards recognition of his experience and expertise not just nationwide, but also by the World Health Organization (WHO).



He is a sought after speaker and facilitator in areas pertaining to Research Methodology, Data Management & Statistics. Since 2002, he has been involved in many Geographic Information System (GIS) projects, one of which was mapping health facilities and services for Ministry of Health policy decision making. To date he has published more than 80 peer-reviewed articles in local, regional and international journals and more than 100 conference abstracts on the topics of health systems research, epidemiology and instrument validation. He was also involved in producing more than 60 technical reports and proceedings.

Visit by...

YBRS. DR HISHAMSHAH BIN MOHD IBRAHIM, OUR NEW DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL (RESEARCH AND TECHNICAL SUPPORT)

IMR Laboratories at the NIH Complex Setia Alam was honored to receive a visit on 28 February 2020, from YBrs. Dr Hishamshah bin Mohd Ibrahim, our new Deputy Director General (Research and Technical Support). Dr Hishamshah visited the laboratories of Electron Microscopy Unit, Nutrition, Metabolic and Cardiovascular Research Centre, as well as the Biomedical Research Core Facility (BioRCF) IMR, to provide his constructive suggestions on the IMR's future long term strategies in the improvement of laboratories' performance. A word of encouragement was delivered by him for IMR to maintain a high level of professionalism in all research work carried out at the facility.



Dr Hishamshah being briefed on the advanced technology laboratory and capacities



Dr Hishamshah visited the laboratories in IMR of NIH Complex, Setia Alam

A VISIT TO IMR JALAN PAHANG BY YB MINISTER OF HEALTH MALAYSIA, YB DATO' SRI DR ADHAM BABA

● 27 March 2020

While the world faced the COVID-19 pandemic, we were privileged to have the Minister of Health Malaysia, YB Dato' Sri Dr. Adham Baba visit IMR during the peak of the pandemic in March 2020. The objective of the visit was to monitor the development of IMR's efforts in battling COVID-19. The visit enabled YB Minister of Health, to see first-hand the work being carried out in IMR and to ensure that IMR has adequate resources and support to sustain its capacity at the national level. The visit primarily focused on diagnostics and laboratory capacity. YB Minister of Health was briefed by IMR Director, Dr Hj Tahir bin Aris, on the organization, functions and activities conducted in the Institute. YB Minister of Health was also given a demonstration and explanation on the Standard Operating Procedures practiced at COVID-19 Specimen Receiving counter and the precautionary measures taken in using Personal protective equipment (PPE) in COVID-19 laboratories.

YB Minister of Health was very impressed with the laboratory services in IMR and acknowledged the hard work carried out by IMR in the fight against COVID-19. He adjourned his visit by graciously thanking the frontliners and handing out food packets.

THANK YOU ALL
FRONTLINERS..



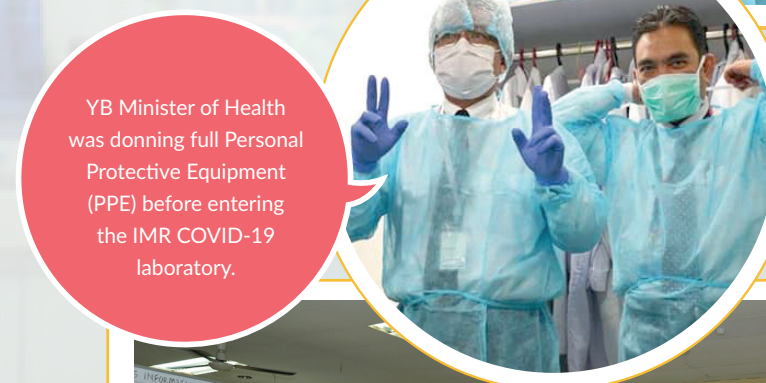
YB Minister of Health was welcomed by Dr Hishamshah bin Mohd Ibrahim as our New Deputy Director General (Research and Technical Support), together with Dr Tahir, IMR director with IMR Centre and Unit Heads.



The IMR director was presenting the structure functioning and activities conducted in IMR



Dr Ravindran Thayan, Head of Virology unit explained to our Minister step by step the process to identify presence of coronavirus in clinical samples, right from the preparation of RT-PCR Reagents, the RT-PCR tests on COVID-19, until the results are analyzed and reported to Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre.



YB Minister of Health was donning full Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) before entering the IMR COVID-19 laboratory.



The YB Minister of Health made contributions to all healthcare front liners in IMR as sign of appreciation.



Highlight

IMR MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS: THE ROLE OF IMR LABORATORIES IN BATTLING COVID-19

A media conference on the laboratory response towards COVID-19 by IMR was conducted on 26 February 2020. Reporters from news agencies including New Strait Times Press (NSTP), Harian Metro, Berita Harian, Bernama TV and Radio, RTM News and Radio, the Malaysian Insight, The Sun, China Press, Malay Mail, The STAR, Sin Chew and MalaysiaKini attended the press conference.



IMR siap siaga berdepan virus baharu selain Covid-19 [METROTV]

BY SRI AYU KARTIKA AMRI DAN FALIAH ALIA RADIN MOHD
FEBRUARY 26, 2020 AT 2:40 PM

INSTITUT Penyelidikan dan Perubatan (IMR), bersedia berdepan dengan sebarang kemungkinan serangan virus di negara ini selain Covid-19.

Pengarah IMR, Dr Tahir Aris berkata,

Covid-19 tests and delivery of results in just six hours, says doctor

By SIRA HABIBU
sira@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The Institute for Medical Research (IMR) can deliver Covid-19 test results within six hours after receiving samples, says its Infectious Disease Research Centre's Virology Unit chief Dr Ravindran Thayan.

He said it was vital to quickly test and deliver the results, enabling

health authorities to immediately carry out contact tracing if the samples tested positive.

"We have also trained staff members at 12 designated hospitals and five public health laboratories nationwide to carry out the test.

"Samples that tested positive at the designated hospitals and laboratories must also be delivered to IMR for further confirmation.

"The designated hospitals and

labs must also send us five random samples that were tested negative within the week. This is done to double-check the results," he said after briefing newsmen at IMR facilities yesterday.

Dr Ravindran said they used the World Health Organisation (WHO) Covid-19 reagents to carry out the test at a cost of RM100 per sample.

He said on Jan 11, Chinese scientists had shared information on the

genetic makeup of the new virus in the common database, enabling IMR officers to develop primers and probes sequences that are specific for Covid-19.

"IMR officers succeeded in optimising the real-time RT-PCR Covid-19 test on Jan 22, and we supplied the reagent to the Sungai Buloh National Public Health Laboratory on Jan 24 to test the first three positive cases detected in Malaysia,

where the patients had come into contact with positive patients warded in Singapore.

"The test developed by IMR was used to positively identify four Covid-19 cases prior to the arrival of the WHO Covid-19 reagents on Jan 26.

"The samples taken earlier yielded the same result when we tested again with WHO Covid-19 reagents," he said.

The Director of IMR, Dr Hj. Tahir bin Aris welcomed the reporters, and the media were briefed by Dr Norazah Ahmad, Head of Infectious Disease Research Centre (IDRC) and Dr Ravindran Thayan, Head of the Virology unit on the laboratory investigation protocols for COVID-19. In addition, the media representatives

were given a tour to the Advanced Technology Centre (ATC) laboratory. The tour included demonstration on procedures involved in the COVID-19 investigation such as sample processing, virus inactivation, viral RNA extraction, reagent preparation, real time RT-PCR assay, waste management and results reporting.



Briefing was given before the laboratory visit



The IMR Laboratory personnel was explaining on the sample processing procedure



Group photo with the reporters from various news agencies at the end of the visit

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION: THE COLLABORATION BETWEEN RESEARCHES FROM IMR/NIH WITH MALAYSIAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES ON COVID-19

• 14 February 2020

A meeting involving experts from the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the researchers representing various public universities was held in IMR, NIH on 14 February 2020. The teams worked to identify COVID-19 research opportunities, and to match investigators from different institution to develop research collaboration. This collaboration is important for the research professional to utilize their expertise to make an impact on the pandemic which has impacted the communities near and far. A total of 35 projects were listed under 6 workstreams, including:

- 1 Use of AI and Big Data Analysis
- 2 Epidemiology and Public Health
- 3 Laboratory Research
- 4 Clinical Research
- 5 Social and Behavioral Research
- 6 Mobile Application.



The meeting was chaired by Dr. Norazah Ahmad, Head of Infectious Disease Research Centre (IDRC), IMR. Representatives from IMR, other NIH Research Institutes and Public Universities were present

"DARAH MUDA" CORONAVIRUS PROGRAM ON TV BERNAMA WITH DR ROZAINANEE, IMR CLINICAL VIROLOGIST

Dr. Rozainanee Mohd Zain, the clinical Virology Specialist from virology unit was invited as the panel in addressing the Coronavirus related issues in the TV program: News Channel on 12 February 2000.

GREAT JOB!!





The Antibiotic Fun Run 2020 was flagged off by the Minister of Health Malaysia, together with Minister of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry.

IMR ANTIBIOTICS FUN RUN 2020 THEMED "UNNECESSARY USE CAUSES HARM"

● 19 January 2020

The Antibiotic Fun Run which was officiated by the Minister of Health Malaysia, was successfully held on 19 Jan 2020 at Malaysian Agro Exposition Park (MAEPS). This event was jointly organized by IMR, the Department of Veterinary Services, Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry (MOA) and the Family Health Development Division, Ministry of Health (BPKK, MOH).

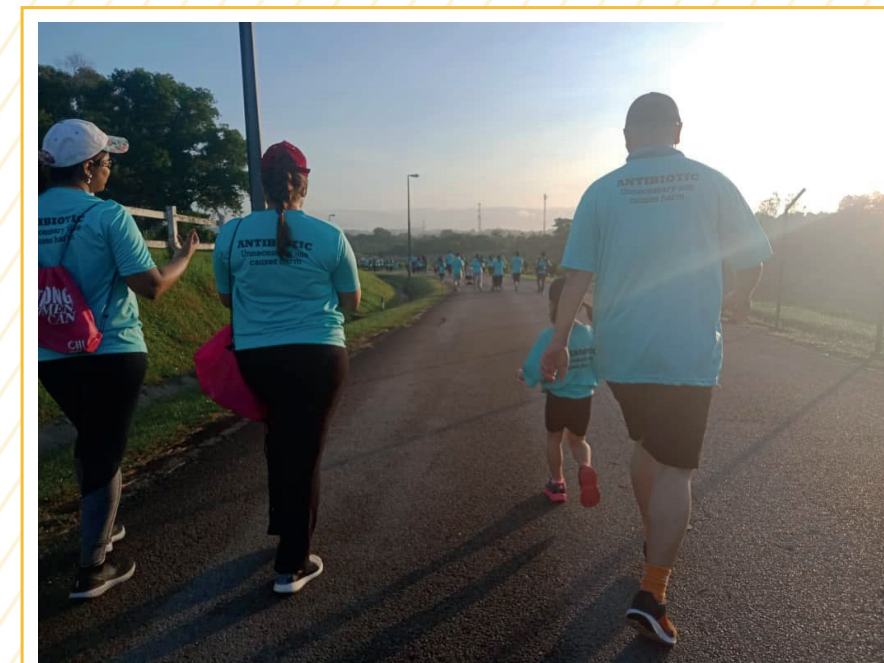


The participants were excited to have a group photo with the VVIPs before the flag off



The Director General of Health Malaysia and the Deputy Director General (Research and Technical Support), also attended the event.

The event themed "Antibiotic: Unnecessary Use Causes Harm", aimed to raise awareness on the appropriate and safe use of antibiotics, in conjunction with the World Antibiotics Awareness Week on 18-24 Nov 2019. More than a thousand participants attended this fun run which included members from the MOH, MOA and the community.



SAY NO TO ANTIBIOTICS MISUSE AND OVERUSE!

THE MOU BETWEEN IMR AND MAKNA ON THE MALAYSIAN STEM CELL REGISTRY (MSCR)



The MoU signing ceremony between IMR Director and the General Manager of MAKNA, witnessed by Head of MSCR and Deputy General Manager MAKNA (3 gambar share satu caption)

● 10 February 2020

10 February 2020 marked a significant day for the Malaysian Stem Cell Registry (MSCR) as a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Dr Hj Tahir Aris, the IMR Director and Pn Farahida, the General Manager of MAKNA. This event was held in IMR boardroom, NIH Setia Alam, was also attended by Mr Vemanna Appanah (Deputy General Manager MAKNA), Dr Feisul Idzwan Mustapha (Deputy Director for Non-Communicable Diseases), Dr Masita Arip (Head of MSCR), officers from Allergy and Immunology Research Centre (AIRC) and MAKNA.

This MoU was an extension to the existing MoU which was signed in 1999, will further enhance collaboration to improve the MSCR project through the increasing numbers of registered voluntary stem cell donors.

The MSCR was founded in the year 2000 as a joint project by the Ministry of Health Malaysia, MAKNA and IMR, which serves as a directory of all registered stem cell donors in Malaysia. Its establishment aims to facilitate the search for compatible stem cell donors for patients with hematological disorders. There are currently 33,800 registered stem cell donors with 16 compatible blood stem cell transplantations successfully carried out among Leukaemic patients in Malaysia.



RM 3.1 MILLION FUND BY PERMODALAN NASIONAL BERHAD (PNB) TO IMR AS PART OF CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) PROGRAM



The Senior Vice President of PNB Representative was handing over the CSR program offer letter to IMR Director.

● 13 February 2020

The offer letter for the CSR program was presented by En Aziz Anuar, the Senior Vice President of PNB to Dr Hj Tahir Aris the IMR director, on 13 February 2020 at the IMR Boardroom, NIH Setia Alam.

The PNB CSR team was authorized to manage the Zakat fund since 2016 in order to assist eligible government agencies with the financing of healthcare equipment.

The CSR proposal was initiated by Dr Masita Arip, Head of Allergy and Immunology Research Center (AIRC), IMR together with the Transplantation Immunology Unit with the aim to enhance laboratory facilities for Malaysia's organ transplant and immunological testing. The proposal was expanded thereafter involving other units in AIRC and the Virology Unit. The proposal was fully supported by the Ministry of Health Malaysia.



The presentation on CSR program by the PNB Representatives.



Group photos between the IMR and PNB representatives



aquaria
KLCC

IMR

Aquaria KLCC

Rodent Exhibition

January - March 2020
in collaboration with
Institute for Medical Research Malaysia (IMR)

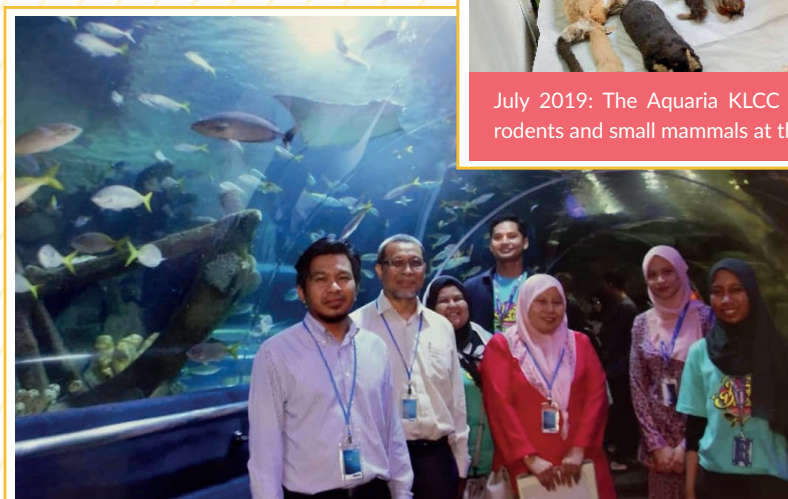
Collaboration THE MOU BETWEEN IMR BIOMEDICAL MUSEUM AND AQUARIA KLCC

A MoU was signed between the Biomedical Museum, IMR and Aquaria KLCC in January 2020. This MOU formalizes the cooperation between IMR and Aquaria KLCC by providing various specimens of rare rodent species from Biomedical Museum to be exhibited at Aquaria KLCC from January-March 2020.

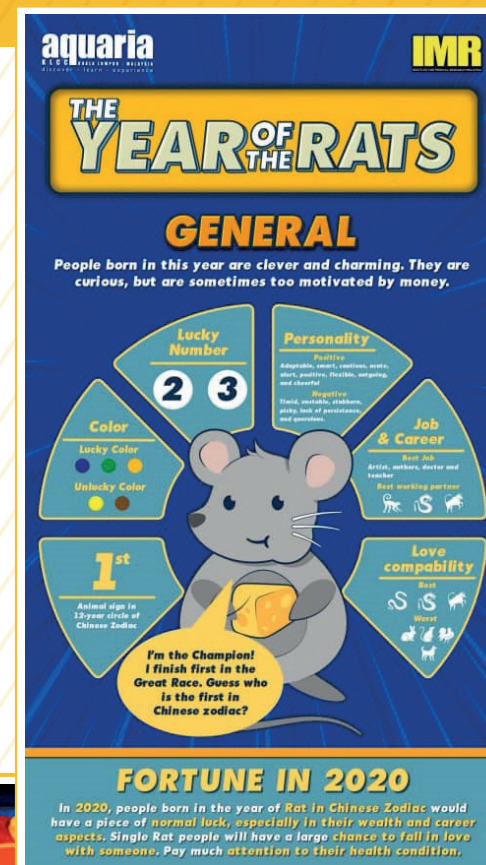
Aquaria KLCC are pioneers in conducting exhibitions on unique self-created themes that receives over a million visitors annually.



July 2019: The Aquaria KLCC management and staff viewing the specimens of rodents and small mammals at the biomedical Museum IMR.



November 2019: A visit by the Head of Biomedical Museum IMR and team to Aquaria KLCC

aquaria
KLCC

IMR

THE YEAR OF THE RATS

GENERAL
People born in this year are clever and charming. They are curious, but are sometimes too motivated by money.

Lucky Number
2 3

Color
Lucky Color: Green
Unlucky Color: Yellow

Personality
Positive: Adaptable, clever, cautious, witty, alert, positive, flexible, energetic and cheerful.
Negative: Thin, restless, stubborn, petty, lack of persistence, and greediness.

Job & Career
Best Job: Artist, author, doctor and teacher.
Best working partner: Rat.

Love compatibility
Best: Rat, Ox, Goat, Pig.

Fortune in 2020
In 2020, people born in the year of Rat in Chinese Zodiac would have a piece of normal luck, especially in their wealth and career aspects. Single Rat people will have a large chance to fall in love with someone. Pay much attention to their health condition.

A total of eleven rodent species were selected from the Biomedical Museum for display at the Aquaria KLCC. This exhibition was in line with the Chinese Zodiac of the Rat for the 2020 Lunar New Year. The specimens comprised of two *Leopoldamys sabanus* (Long-tailed Giant Rat), *Rhizomys sumatrensis* (Large Bamboo Rat), two *Echinosorex gymnura* (Moonrat), *Rattus argentiventer* (Ricefield Rat), *Maxomys surifer* (Red Spiny Rat), *Sundamys muelleri* (Mueller's Rat), *Rattus annandalei* (Annandale's Sundaic Rat), *Bandicota indica* (Greater Bandicoot Rat) and *Pithecheir parous* (Malayan Tree Rat).



The Biomedical Museum of SRC was invited as special guests during the Chinese New Year 2020 celebration at Aquaria KLCC.



The management from Aquaria KLCC, together with representatives from the Biomedical Museum of SRC, IMR were viewing the rodent exhibition during Chinese New Year 2020

In addition to the Rodent exhibition, future exhibitions have been planned for the next phase of the collaboration which includes three other rare specimens: *Manis javanice* (Sunda Pangolin), *Cynogale bennettii* (Otter Civet) and *Arcictis binturong* (Bearcat).



Rodents and carnivores were prepared for future exhibition in March till May 2020

(from left to right):
Arcictis binturong (Bearcat),
Cynogale bennettii (Otter Civet),
and *Manis javanice* (Sunda Pangolin)

