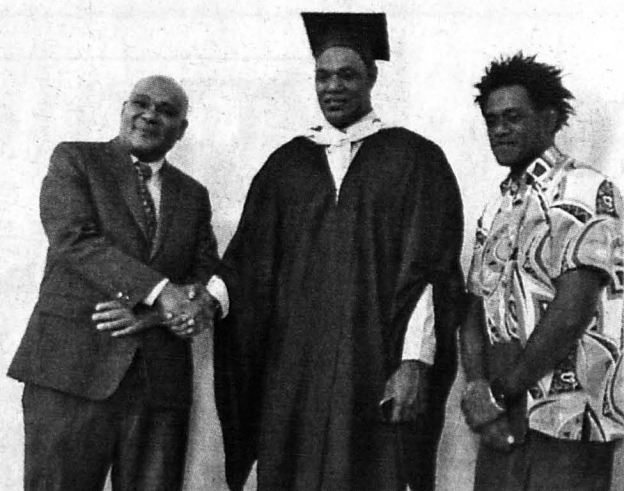




Ikbal with her daughter (right) and Siham.



Apisai shaking hand with his counsellor, Pita (left) while his 24-year-old brother, Samar Ayad looks on.



Pei Sung (middle) with her proud parents. Her father, Toh Chee Kong, is the chief editor of See Hua Daily News.

Paralyzed husband motivates Iraqi to complete degree

By Saffrah Mat Salleh

KOTA KINABALU: The paralyzed husband of Iraqi student Ikbal Abdul Nabi has greatly motivated her to complete for doctorate degree in Human Resource Management at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

"My husband called me in the morning before the graduation ceremony, congratulating me. I was surprised that my husband had not slept yet as it was about 2am in Oman. He told me that he could not sleep and imagined me wearing my robe during the ceremony," said the 51-year-old who was one of the 5,083 students who received their diploma, bachelor's, master's and Ph.D during the university's three-day 17th convocation which started on Saturday.

Ikbal received her doctorate degree in Human Resource Management after seven years of studying at the Faculty of Business, Economic and Accounting, UMS.

Her Omani husband is paralyzed due to an accident at his workplace at a petroleum company and has been on a wheelchair for 25 years.

Ikbal said that her husband, who is also a famous writer in Oman, is the key person that motivated her to finish her Ph.D.

The mother of a 24-year-old daughter and two sons, aged 14 and 18, also shared her happiness of being surprised by her daughter, who came to her convocation without her knowing.

Currently, Ikbal works in Oman as a human resource expert at the Ministry of Housing. She had completed her bachelor and master's degree in Libya and Iraq respectively.

Sharing her challenges during her study days, she said that previously there was no direct flight from Oman to Sabah. She had to take four flights to come here. Now, it is much easier to come here as there is direct flight from Kuala Lumpur to Oman.

Ikbal also said that initially, she applied to six universities to further her studies in PhD and UMS was one of her choices. She picked UMS as she felt comfortable being here and she likes the city as well as the people.

Balancing her life as a working woman and her family as a mother and wife was very challenging for Ikbal. However, she managed to get through it.

She was thankful for the easy access via online which enabled her to communicate with her supervisor even though she was working at her office in Oman as well as managing other things via the UMS' website. It helped to smoothen her study process so much.

Also accompanying her during the convocation ceremony on Saturday was the general manager at the Ministry of Housing in Oman, Siham Al-Harathi, 42, who is like a sister to her.

Another international student

from Fiji, Apisai Rinamalo, 32, also shed tears of happiness after completing his masters' degree in International Tropical Forestry.

At first Apisai felt bad leaving his wife and two children aged two and six behind, but later his family became his source of motivation to finish his studies.

Coming from a country where its national sport is rugby, Apisai who is standing at 1.95 metres, joined a rugby team in UMS and helped to train the players.

Apisai, who is also a forestry officer in his homeland, was thankful to his government for sponsoring his studies and will work with the government once he gets back home.

Meanwhile, the Fiji High Commissioner in Kuala Lumpur, Pita Tagicakirewe, said that UMS was able to produce high quality graduates at a relatively lower cost than Australia and New Zealand.

He said that Fiji had continued to send its nationals to study in Malaysia after sending the first batch of 50 students in 2008. Next year, he said Fiji would send its students to study agriculture at the UMS campus in Sandakan.

A married couple, Melvin Matunjun, 40, and Gabriela J. Jeoplik, 28, who hail from Penampang and Inanam respectively, had received their master's degree in Engineering of Oil and Gas and Science Biotechnology respectively on Saturday.

Melvin, who is an engineer consultant, said that he did not plan to graduate together which his wife who was the first to enroll for her master's study.

Gabriela shared that they first met during their first year of bachelor degree studies in 2006. They got married in 2012 when they were doing their master's.

Another young doctorate recipient, Toh Pei Sung, 30, felt excited and happy getting her PhD in management. Also a lecturer in the Faculty of Business, Economics and Accounting, she planned to be a professor next and hopefully to have a bright career achievement.

Earlier, director of Centre for International Affairs of UMS, Molly Donna, explained that UMS currently has international students from more than 35 countries and their enrolment has increased.

The largest number

of students came from China followed by Brunei Darussalam, Indonesia, Tanzania and several other Asian countries.

She also disclosed that students from China would usually take

up business administration program which they saw UMS as a trademark for business studies while students from Tanzania would study engineering here.



A couple received their masters on Saturday.