

**FOCUS
ON:**

SHORT TERM ATTACHMENT AT SCUN (7-24 July 2009)

By Mashitah Mohd. Yusoff

South-Central University for Nationalities (SCUN) in Wuhan, China, was established by the Chinese Government in 1951 as a national university. SCUN has expressed interest for close academic collaboration with UMP. The attachment was a warm up to a full blown collaboration. A prior arrangement had been made for my attachment with a counterpart at the College of Pharmacy (SCUN) in February this year. My counterpart was Professor Mei Zhinan, the Vice Dean. The duration of my stay in Wuhan was 18 days. Given the summer term and A (H1N1) outbreak in various parts of China, my counterpart was away a number of days to defend his grant applications and to listen in and advice on the disease outbreak. However, I went to work about ten hours everyday including weekends, with his colleagues and students. We conducted preliminary screening on anti-cancer activities of two Malaysian medicinal plants. These early results are expected around late September. I also did my part by giving a 50-minute lecture on medicinal plants research in Malaysia to about 25 faculty members and graduate students.



SCUN is situated on South Lake and is a lovely campus surrounded by flower gardens and trees, a very conducive learning environment. My apartment was a three-minute walk away from the College of Pharmacy where I was assigned office number 511. There is a Muslim dining room on campus for the 1,000 Muslim students. A meal card is used for all meal purchases. Occasionally, I would be taken to lunch or dinner with groups of researchers. I also dined with

Vice Presidents of the University and Deans and Vice Deans of both Colleges. Wuhan is a large industrial city comprising the townships of Wuchang, Hango and Hanyang, hence its name. It harmoniously blends the modern and the traditional and is home to over 8 million people. Public transport and facilities are easily accessible. While there are many shopping opportunities off-campus, most needs can be taken care off at the supermarket on campus.

During the final week of my attachment, I was accompanied by two MSc students on a boat trip, up and down the Yangtze River to see the Three Gorges Dam in 36 hours. I also witnessed the total eclipse of the sun the morning we landed at the town of Yi Chang. Prior to leaving China, I made recommendations on research topics for the MoA signing with UMP involving the chemistry of natural products and materials. I left Wuhan on July 24th.