

# Novelist and his stripes

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DID you know that the *tualang* tree is one of the tallest trees in the Asian region? Or that the gaur (*seladang*) is the biggest wild buffalo in the world?

Better still, both of them can be found in our very own forests.

In *Tiger King of the Golden Jungle*, author Steve Oh demonstrates that Malaysians do not have to venture very far to see these wonders.

To his surprise, Oh said that after speaking to many Malaysians, he realised a lot of them did not know much about their country's precious plant and wildlife treasures.

With his book, he aims to not only expose Malaysians to what has been around in their backyard for centuries, he also keeps it current by bringing out themes like wildlife destruction.

According to Oh, "The novel is like the tall *tualang* tree that spreads its many strong branches over its jungle surroundings. Each branch represents a sub-plot and a mini story of its own. There is a plethora

of themes but one that threads them all together is that of coming to one's senses."

This fictional novel was written from two different perspectives to provide an insight into the same situation – the humans, who are the developers and poachers; and the animals, trying their best to save their home.

Having lived in Perth, Australia for the past nine years, many would wonder where Oh got his motivation to finish writing the novel, which he started 12 years ago.

The answer was simple: Apart from his genuine love for the nation's natural resources, he said, "There are many talents in Malaysia, but our problem is that we do not market ourselves enough, so we lose out to the rest of the world."

He added that as a country blessed with rich flora and fauna, we should work together to preserve these natural treasures.

"I try to come back as often as possible, because at the end of the day, this is my home."

At the book's launch at UCSI University recently, Oh also performed a song he wrote with local artist Elaine Kang.

Appearing in a tiger-striped outfit, he



From left: Salleh, Ng, Embas, Oh, Dr Abdul Rahman, and Tong at the book's launch.

proved himself not only as a novelist, but an able songwriter and musician, strumming his electric guitar and singing in a duet.

Looking at the ample possibilities, Oh told reporters that he was working on a musical with all the songs he had written.

Also present at the event were Natural

Resources & Environment Minister Datuk Douglas Uggah Embas, Malaysian Nature Society president Tan Sri Salleh Mohd Nor, the university's president Peter Ng, chancellor Tan Sri Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Abdul Rahman Arshad, and Info Didik chief executive officer William Tong.