



# Exploring the Unknown

## Now and Next

The WHMCE Distinguished Lecture Series was privileged to host the renowned primatologist and anthropologist Dr. Jane Goodall at HKU on 27 November 2024. In her presentation titled “Exploring the Unknown: The Passion to Understand and Inspire the World,” she captured the essence of exploration that WHMCE seeks to instill in students, motivating young individuals to venture into the unknown. The event attracted more than 800 attendees, including students, faculty, and alumni of HKU, as well as schoolchildren and members of the general public.

Through her childhood recollections, the challenges she faced in the field, and her intriguing stories about her interactions with chimpanzees, Goodall highlighted the significance of nurturing a passion for the natural world. By sharing her personal experiences and discoveries, she motivated young individuals to cultivate their curiosity about wildlife and ecosystems. At a time when transcontinental travel was rare and challenging, her determination to explore the vast continent of Africa served as a powerful encouragement for students to embrace and appreciate every opportunity for fieldwork, exploration and volunteer positions in conservation.

Dr. Wong How Man’s concluding comments reflected this spirit of curiosity and a desire to understand the world, emphasising the importance of critical thinking in exploring and sharing scientific knowledge. This drive for knowledge and determination to find answers inspires young people to embark on their own explorations.







# A Dialogue of Exploration

## Insights from George Yeo's Journey

Wong How Man



### Faces Beyond Politics

Fountainside Chat  
with George Yeo

22 Nov 2024

Anyone can Google George's career with many pages of description and endless YouTube lectures and interviews on geopolitics. He is both a great orator as well as a prolific writer, as I have read his three-volume biography, with illustrations, about his illustrious life from childhood, education, military years, to peaking at several ministry portfolios in public service to his country of Singapore. These include top positions in information and the arts, health, trade and industry, to ultimately becoming the Minister of Foreign Affairs. His books also include candid recollections of his personal and family life, all the way up to recent years.

I am also one of his many followers online. My motivation in following George is not so much because of my rather limited and select interest in geography and politics (thus geopolitics), but my keen interest in seeing how his thinking process and analytical mind work. I have been fascinated by his knowledge of history, both western and oriental history, secular or religious. His easy draw on such knowledge in making analogy is a joy to listen to. His quick wit in responding to Q&A, at times very acute and provocative from the interviewer or the audience, is often simple, straight forward, direct, and often drawing laughter from his listeners. Because of his turbocharged mind in referencing history, current or past events of relevance, his answers often provide firepower of surprise, at times creating a boomerang effect to those who tried to corner him.



I invited George, who readily agreed, to join us at the HKU Wong How Man Centre for Exploration Fountainside Chat that I would moderate. I remembered several incidents that I encountered George, be it at a forum in Guilin, or asking in-kind support for equipment shipping when he chaired over Kerry Logistics, at his book signing surrounded by eager followers seeking his autograph, or at my home for dinner with freshly caught seafood from in front of my house. We, together with his wife Jennifer, went to a traditional Cantonese opera inside a bamboo scaffolding theatre, while dining at a street-stand folding table. Jennifer even let her fingers dance over a piano in my home as she told me that she has always wanted to become a concert pianist, but opted to study law as it is more practical.



But one occasion stood out in my memory when George and I completed a session of discussion in the kitchen of my library house in Shek O. Just as he was about to leave to get back into his waiting car, George picked up the glass he had used, walked around to the wash basin, cleaned his glass before taking leave. Such a small act of modesty speaks much of his character, which cannot be just assigned to his discipline of military training, rising to become Chief-of-staff of the Singapore Air Force.



I have informed George in advance that our chat at HKU will be more candid, casual and personal, with stories revealing some of the other personalities he had come across in different walks of life. It would be regarding spiritual and religious leaders, royalties, heads of governments, and his escapades with exploration spirit as an army officer and even with a Grand Master in Qigong. Indeed, for that hour and a half of conversation, George delivered superbly, entertaining a small group of professors, professionals, and proactive students eager to expand their knowledge and learn the modesty of someone as special as George Yeo.





# October 2024 Excerpts of student reflections **HKU STUDENT TRIP TO PALAWAN**

## **I Came with Wonders, Left with More**

*Lee Ka Ching Monica*

*Year 4, Medicine*

The best thing is not something planned in the itinerary, but the unexpected things. I did not expect to stay in a treehouse; I did not expect to sleep outdoors without a tent or sleeping bag. I was taken aback when we stopped at a riverbank, which would be our rest stop that night. Twelve students and two teachers slept on large banana leaves as mattresses under a huge tarp. That was all we had. The bright moon was so shiny in the starless sky. Clouds were moving with winds, occasionally covering parts of the moon. It was like dilated small bowels on the abdominal X-ray of intestinal obstruction.

With this totally new experience, I started to wonder why the Bataks could sleep well and survive in the wild, primitive and harsh environment. Through a short but pleasurable rendezvous, I was intrigued to know more about the indigenous people in Palawan. Exploration is a mode of thought, a method of learning and a means of understanding. Being physically present in an area for a certain period triggered a mental process of raising questions and looking for answers. It enhanced the power of observation and awareness of the surroundings. It is time to let go of stereotypes and prejudice, let the new experience evoke an emotional response, and compare with my pre-existing knowledge. In short, a reflection.

## **A Comparison Between Batak Dance and Chinese Dance**

*Wu Sze Ching*

*Year 4, Speech-Language Pathology*

This nine-day trip was undoubtedly one of the most memorable trips ever. Unmixed heritage, is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. On the trip, we had the honor of watching a Batak dance performance. As a Chinese dancer myself, I could not help but pay extra attention to the Batak dance and contrasted the difference between it and Chinese dance. The most notable difference is their style. Batak dance demonstrates a style that is rustic, simple, and direct. The audience

can easily understand the messages and symbolization from the dance moves. For instance, two Batak male dancers danced in opposition to one another and held swords, showing the competitiveness between males in the tribe. In some moves, they attacked simultaneously, whereas in some moves one of them defended. Switching roles was also frequent. Whereas female dancers usually danced in a circle, including dancers of diverse ages to symbolize unity and harmony.

Chinese dance is often said to have a reserved beauty. Although Chinese dance has become more expressive over time, sometimes a considerable amount of attention is still required to interpret the meaning behind the dance moves compared to the straightforward Batak dance. This is especially true for more

classical dance pieces. In the interview with a Batak dancer, she stated that the dance movements were exactly the ones created by their ancestor a long time ago, not even a single dance move was modified, deleted from, or added to the dance. It impressed me a lot how intact the dance was preserved, and their persistence in cultural preservation commanded my respect.



## **EVENT RECAP**



**October 2024**

Student trip to CERS Palawan Centre



**November 2024**

WHMCE Fountainside Chat with George Yeo



**November 2024**

WHMCE Distinguished Lecture Series with Dr. Jane Goodall



**January 2025**

Student trip to CERS Shangrila Centre