

SOCIETY frowns on anyone who breaks the rules but sometimes breaking the rules is necessary, believes this gutsy photojournalist.

## Zann Huang

She travelled alone to Tehran, the capital of Iran, to capture glimpses of the lives of the people there. It was not an easy task and sometimes she faced dire consequences for her actions.

"I was taken away about 20 times by the police for questioning because I broke the conventions there of how a woman should behave in public," she said during her talk.

On assignment there for *Asian Geographic*, she shocked many Iranians when she entered males-only areas, such as a *zurkhaneh* (a traditional Persian gym), the men's section of a bus, and a barbershop.

She wanted to illustrate the separation of the genders over there in her photos, and being female she felt that she had no choice but to break some rules.

As a female traveller, she also faced other perils. "I was a woman walking around alone. Sometimes, I would be harassed by men," she said. In one instance a man fondled her bottom and when no one came to her defence, she had to take the law into her own hands. "I beat up my attacker in the streets. So now, people call me Jackie Chan's sister," she laughed. However, being a woman in Iran's patriarchal

society has its advantages. She could traverse areas that are forbidden to male photojournalists. "You always only see photos of the men praying in mosques, but not the women. This is why," she said.

Having also worked for *TIME* magazine, this largely self-taught photographer has been honoured with prestigious awards and participated in photo exhibitions worldwide.

She specialises in humanitarian and socio-political issues in restricted areas. Her first serious foray into photojournalism was recording the after effects of the Asian tsunami disaster in 2005.



By JO TIMBUONG, CHONG JINN XIUNG and GABEY GOH  
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In today's hyper-wired world, it has become imperative to recognise the fundamental qualities that connect us as human beings. That was the message underlying the fourth installation of TEDxKL.

The afternoon-long event sought to impart the notion that despite social barriers, what will propel us forward is our curiosity, our ability to forgive and appreciate diversity, as well as our desire to connect with each other.

"We must use our collective knowledge to create a better future, so it's time that we as a species, learn to laugh, ask questions, connect and make radical changes

# Opening minds

while being true to ourselves," according to a crowd-sourced video that marked the beginning of the event.

The first speaker Sinar Project co-founder Khairil Yusof, believes that the people and the government must be interdependent on each other for the good of the country.

He kicked things off by introducing the audience to the open governance movement and how mining through publically available data online can help offer valuable insights into government initiatives and civil society issues.

Another speaker, Unscientific Malaysia founder Zurairi A.R. told the audience that it's okay for anyone to say "I don't know." "Saying 'I don't know' means your opinions are not set in stone; that you are willing to listen and learn," he explained.

"So to turn this expression of defeat into a way of bettering ourselves, don't be afraid to say 'I don't know, but I will find out,'" he said.

In her call for a better city, #BetterKL curator Goh Sze Ying asked attendees to start a different kind of conversation in and about their place of residence.

During her talk, she introduced the While You Wait Project, where displays are set up at bus stops to provoke thought and interaction with commuters, who have time to spare while they wait for their transportation to arrive.

TEDxKL attendees were also treated to a four-song set by indie

artist Froya — her folksy and light-hearted melodies setting the tone for the day, while comedian Kavin Jayaram had the crowd in stitches with his take on interdependence in relationships and between difference cultures.

At the end of the event, which also saw a surprise encore performance by Jamal Raslan, a spoken-word poet who was featured in last year's TEDxKL, founding curator Daniel Cerventus Lim took to the stage to thank the audience.

"It took us a really long time to curate this year's list of speakers, hope you liked it, clap if you do," he said to thunderous applause.

Lim ended the day's event with a call to action, asking attendees to take up a cause and volunteer, highlighting the Do Good. Volunteer initiative (<http://dogoodvolunteer.com>) launched by *The Star* as one avenue to find out how to contribute.



iSnap me for more photos and a video  
<http://thestar.com.my/isnap>

## Kevin Mark Low

ONE must make the distinction between form and content, said the architect and founder of an architectural firm called "small projects."

He said many make the categorical mistake of thinking they are talking about content when it's really about form. "So they keep changing the way forms appear without working on what content really means," he said.

To highlight his point, he shared a series of slides featuring well-known skyscrapers in the world.

"These buildings use the same materials such as glass and concrete and utilise the same design elements such as horizontal lines to break up the monotony," he said. "We have not really used technology in new ways to

radically change how we approach the design of buildings."

"In fact, despite the advancements made such as putting satellites in orbit or medical breakthroughs, we've been cleaning buildings the same way for the past 50 years."

Among his small projects are a mailbox that keeps its contents dry during monsoon season, and an antidust bookshelf designed to spatially separate a lounge from a study, and for ease of daily maintenance and simplicity of installation. See [www.small-projects.com](http://www.small-projects.com) for more.

His work and articles have been published in architectural journals regionally.

## Ille Gebeshuber

TO address global challenges that are both complicated and interdependent, one cannot specialise.

She advocates an integration of knowledge and disciplines to tackle issues such as the 15 Global Challenges outlined by the United Nations Millennium Project.

Over the years, the fields of specialisation have grown narrower and while this is not a bad thing, to tackle big problems one must take a generalist approach, she believes.

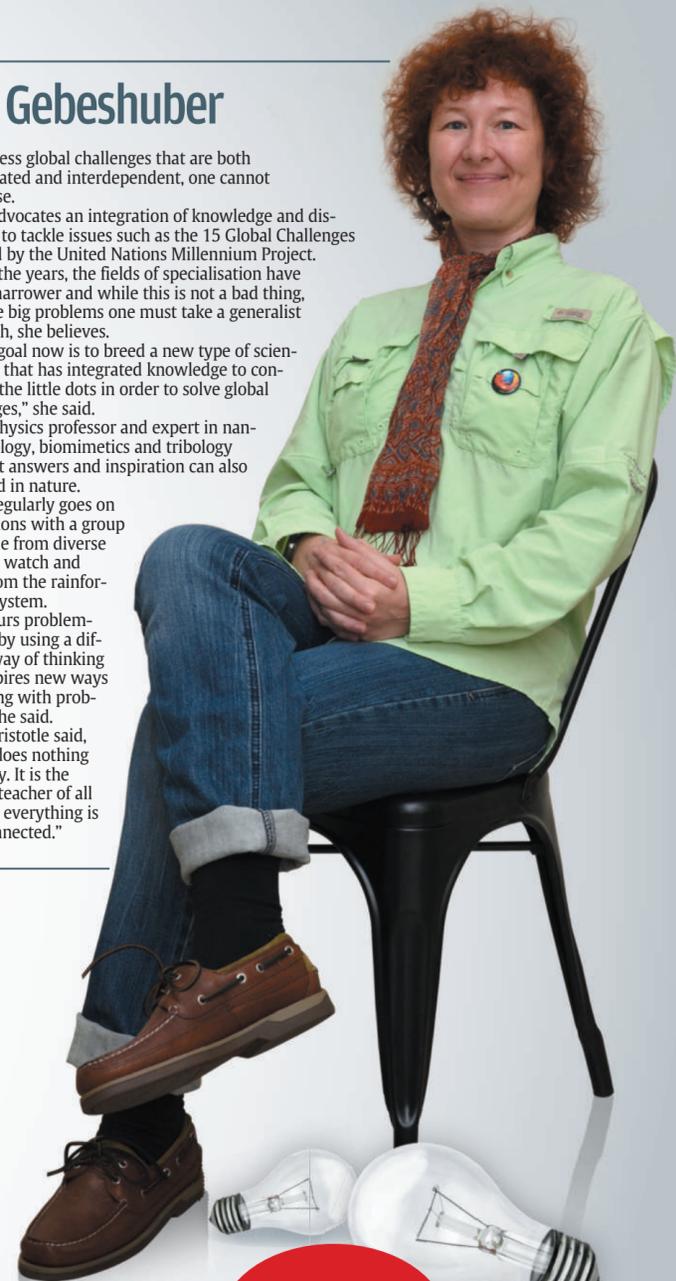
"Our goal now is to breed a new type of scientist, one that has integrated knowledge to connect all the little dots in order to solve global challenges," she said.

The physics professor and expert in nanotechnology, biomimetics and tribology said that answers and inspiration can also be found in nature.

She regularly goes on expeditions with a group of people from diverse fields to watch and learn from the rainforest ecosystem.

"It spurs problem-solving by using a different way of thinking and inspires new ways of dealing with problems," she said.

"As Aristotle said, nature does nothing uselessly. It is the biggest teacher of all because everything is interconnected."



be INSPIRED

TEDxKL

x = independently organized TED event



## Derek Sivers

WHAT is life? That was the question posed by the entrepreneur. He asked members of the audience to fill in the blanks, sharing some insight along the way.

Who you will be as a person is ultimately dependant on the choices you make. "To make good decisions, one needs to trust his or her emotions and ignore logic," he said. Life is also dependant on time, he said, and one must remember it's limited as this will enhance our appreciation of what we have or do.

However, the final answer to the talk was, "life is life."

He recalled an interview he read with his favourite band Talking Heads, in which the members talked about their creative process when it came to their lyrics.

The band wrote random phrases on pieces of paper, tossed them all into a bowl and picked them out to form lyrics to a song.

"It was eye-opening as the lyrics had no meaning except for the meaning that I had projected onto the song," he said.

According to him, almost everything has no meaning and it is the individuals who project and create meaning for their own life.

"So when living, remove whatever meaning that doesn't make sense to you and project whatever suits you," he said.

## Myshkin Ingawale

HE and his team of five "geeks" at Biosense Technologies, a biomedical company in India, invented a non-invasive device for detecting anaemia.

Called TouchB, this affordable and mobile device made it possible for rural healthcare workers to diagnose anaemic patients.

What's interesting is that this device was not the result of expensive R&D but rather through collaboration over the Internet, and the use of free and low-cost open-source 3D modelling software.

"We worked with experts in the field and researched on open platforms like Wikipedia to design our first prototype," he said.

He said that there are more talented scientists today and that they are all connected, and happy to do their part to make the world a better place.

This easy access to such brilliant minds in the field contributed to Biosense's growth over the past three years.

"There will always be barriers along the way but you must never lose your drive. That's what is needed to change the world," he said.



### QUICK FACTS

TEDxKL is an independently organised event under the TED talks banner that is devoted to the theme "Ideas worth spreading."

Now in its fourth year, the Kuala Lumpur edition has evolved into one of the foremost events on the global TED calendar.

The mission of a TEDx event is

simple: To stimulate dialogue and spark connections through TED-like experiences at a local level.

As of this year, more than 3,200 TEDx events have taken place in 800 cities and 126 countries worldwide.

TEDxKL showcased top presenters from a diverse range of fields sharing their passion and needs for Malaysia and the people. It took place at the Temple of Fine Arts in Brickfields, Kuala

Lumpur.

*The Star* is the official media partner for the event. For more information about the event, go to [www.tedxkl.com](http://www.tedxkl.com) and <http://techcentral.my>.

TED is a non-profit organisation that started as a four-day conference in California 28 years ago, asking the world's leading thinkers and doers to give the talk of their lives in 18 minutes.

These talks are then made available free at TED.com.



### QUICK FACTS

THE majestic Temple of Fine Arts in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur, was built to help Indian youths rediscover, appreciate and preserve their culture, arts and heritage.

Construction began in 1991 after patrons took out an RM1.2mil loan to build the edifice. The building was expanded in 2004 at the cost of about RM11mil.

At this five-storey structure on the banks of the Klang river, classes in Indian culture and arts are held, including studies in classical dance, song and music.

It houses a 500-seat performance hall for its students to display their talents.

For more information on the Temple of Fine Arts, visit, [tfa.org.my](http://tfa.org.my).

