Read@UNI with the slogan “With Knowledge We Lead” is one of the Ministry of Education focuses to inculcate reading culture among the society. The campaign was launched on 29 November 2018 by the Honorable Dr. Maszlee Malek, Minister of Education. It is an agenda to support the country in achieving the roadmap “toward the National Reading 2030”. To achieve a state of reading and formulating strategies to stimulate reading activities, all levels of society, communities and public university will be involved. This effort will increase the amount of materials read, and the time spent in reading activities can be improved gradually. The reading campaign was redesigned to meet the current need of society in which various programs will be implemented to achieve the desired objective. As a public university, UMT has implemented various activities to instil reading culture such as Reading Corner Development at the faculty, Reading Week and several contests for UMT community like students and lecturers. These activities are to increase the participation of students and lecturers as well as generating ideas and knowledge towards cultivating literacy.

Reading Program with the theme “Read On” with Maya Karin and Admiral (Rtd) Dato Pahlawan Mohd Rasip Hassan was one of the university’s initiatives to uphold and raise knowledge through reading and discussion activities. Both speakers were invited to share the types of book that help them in their career as well as to encourage students and lecturers in selecting quality reading materials. Interaction and brainstorming sessions were also conducted between the speakers and participants. Ybhg Admiral (Rtd) Dato Pahlawan Mohd Rasip Hassan shared his reading interests since school. He listed some of his preferred book “Scouting for Boys” and “The First Circle”. As for the celebrity invited, Ms. Maya Karin, she shared about her life experiences as a child where she always used the library to search for information. She also mentioned about having one book from her father which has so sentimental value to her. This event was attended by 350 people comprising students, staff, local community and the media.

Source: Mohd Shahrulnizam Zuraimi; msn@umt.edu.my & Abu Hassan Ghazali; ahg@umt.edu.my, Perpustakaan Sultanah Nur Zahirah (PSNZ)
UMT received a courtesy visit from the Canadian High Commissioner in Malaysia, Her Excellency Julia G. Bentley and Political Counsellor, Ms. Esther Van Nes. In conjunction with the visit, Her Excellency delivered a public lecture entitled Diversity, Inclusion and Democracy which was held at the Mahyuddin Auditorium, Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development. The 90 minute public lecture programme was attended by over 300 participants, comprising of UMT staff and students. Among the topics covered during the lecture were the cultural, traditional and multicultural community found in Canada as well as the educational and sponsorship opportunities offered there.

The public lecture program was followed by an official meeting with Professor Dato’ Dr. Nor Aieni Binti Haji Mokhtar, UMT’s Vice-Chancellor at the Senate Lounge, Dewan Sultan Mizan. Also present at the meeting were the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic and International), Deans of the Faculties related to marine and oceanography fields, and Director of the International Center. Among the topics discussed were potential collaborations between UMT and Canada in the field of the Marine and Oceanography, UMT’s niche area. UMT also took the opportunity to introduce the mobility programs offered such as the Volunteer Program at Sea Turtle Research Unit (SEATRU). The visit has given UMT another positive impact on UMT’s internationalization agenda while positioning UMT as a world-renowned Marine and Oceanography institution.

Source: Syarifah Noormaisarah Tuan Besar; noormaisarah@umt.edu.my, International Centre
UMT International Week is an annual programme organised by the UMT International Centre as a platform to engage international students and staff with the local community in Terengganu. One of the objectives to this programme is to encourage the UMT Buddies Club, UMT International Students Club, and UMT staff to socialize with the locals and to contribute towards the agenda of Internationalisation @ Home. The highlight of this programme this year was the Malaysian Cultural Night with the theme “A Night of Cultural Discovery” held at Dewan Sultan Mizan, which saw more than 1,500 attendees.

The Malaysian Cultural Night saw performances such as a sketch portraying international students’ journey, and local cultural performances such as Songket Dance, Bharatanatyam, Chinese Fan Dance, Sumazau Dance, and Sarawak Bamboo Dance. Great performances of song and dance were also performed by the international students from Bangladesh, Somalia, Korea and China. The inward-bound mobility students from China performed an incredible Tang Dynasty Dance Show; a performance of ancient music and dance art. This wonderful event was also made even more memorable by the presence of the inbound mobility students from Guangdong Ocean University, Dongguk University, and Universitas Gadjah Mada who are here for a hands on learning and cultural experience at UMT.

Source: Ahmad Faisal Mohamad Ayob (PhD); ahmad.faisal@umt.edu.my, International Centre
Dear Graduands of 17th UMT Convocation Ceremony 2019,

Congratulations on your academic achievement at UMT!

It gives us great pleasure to invite all of you to attend the 17th UMT Convocation Ceremony which will be held on 16th until 18th November 2019 at Dewan Sultan Mizan, UMT.

To ensure the smooth running of the ceremony, kindly click on the link http://konvokesyen.umt.edu.my, for detailed information on the ceremony and familiarise yourself with the instructions and procedures.

We hope you will be able to join the thousands of UMT graduands together with your family members and friends in this memorable ceremony.

Thank you.
NST By Satiman Jamin - October 5, 2019 @ 8:10pm
KUALA TERENGGANU:

Most major fish species that form the bulk of coastal fishermen’s catch in Terengganu will be depleted in 16 years if nothing is done to stop marine resources destruction by bottom trawler nets.

The good news is that this grim projection can still be prevented if the right steps are taken to ease the pressure on our marine fish stock.

It is this urgent need to protect marine resources from being destroyed by bottom trawler nets that drove Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) lecturer Dr Mohd Fazrul Hisam Abd Aziz to research and design artificial reefs that double as anti-trawler devices (ATD) in collaboration with researchers from Prince of Songkla University, Thailand.

The Fisheries and Food Science faculty lecturer said the pressure on fish stock can be clearly seen from monitoring the size of fish sold in the local market.

“A decade ago a kilogram of yellow-tail scad or seler (Atule mate) consisted of an average of six fish. Now, the size has dwindled so much that a kilogram generally has more than 10 fish.

“The dwindling size shows that the fish has yet to be fully grown, let alone reproduce, before they are caught. This trend combined with fish habitat destruction by bottom trawler nets will result in the depletion of fish stock in our seas in the next decade,” he said.

Showing a picture of a tiger prawn as big as his arm, he said although prawns of such a big size can still be found in Terengganu waters now, they will soon be gone if nothing was done to stop the declining stocks.

Large tiger prawns like this will become a rarity if nothing is done to stop the decline of our marine resources.Dr Mohd Fazrul Hisam Abd Aziz

“Large-sized fish and prawns that can rarely be found in the marketplace now were common a few decades ago. If this trend continues, they can be totally gone in the next few years," he said.

Fazrul pointed out that apart from habitat destruction, the bottom trawler nets also killed the eggs and hatchlings of marine species.

“The sea of Terengganu used to be abundant in squids especially during the squid-jigging season but in recent years the stocks have dwindled so much that even seasoned fishermen struggle to have a decent catch during the height of the season.

“One of the reasons is that bottom trawler nets have been scooping up the squids’ nesting grounds (locally known as kandang) together with the adult squids guarding them against predators. As each nesting ground contains thousands of eggs, their destruction makes it impossible for the squids stock to be naturally replenished,” he said.

Fazrul has successfully deployed a number of artificial reefs that double as ATDs in the coastal waters of Terengganu.

“The ATDs will snag and tear up the bottom trawler nets. Each trawler net costs thousands of ringgit and when combined with the loss of their catch from the torn net, the total potential losses will deter trawlers from venturing into our coastal waters;” he said.

He said the full impact of the ATDs will only be seen after two years as it takes time for marine life to colonise them.

“Artificial reefs have long been proven to increase fish stocks and so will the ATDs by providing shelter from bottom trawler nets and also a safe place for them to reproduce,” he said, adding that he received help from local fishermen in the construction and deployment of the ATDs.

“Their help is a big factor in keeping the cost of the ATDs down. This is a testament of the close relationship we have with the fishermen community here,” he said.

“They are happy to help with this project because they understand that we are helping them protect our marine resources which they depend on for a living,” he said.

He said the research will be published soon and hoped that more ATDs can be built and deployed once the design was patented.

“As a passive deterrent, the ATD is much more effective and costs much less than active patrolling of our seas by enforcement agencies,” he said.

The genus of Tacca (the word is a Latin derivative from Malay’s takkah which means notch) is a group of plant from Dioscoreaceae family that is confined to the tropical and subtropical regions. To date, there are 17 Tacca species worldwide including four species in Peninsular Malaysia namely Tacca chantrieri (Bat flower), T. integrifolia (Keladi murai), T. leontopetaloides (Lukih) and T. palmata (Gadung tiku or Temu giling). Among them, Tacca leontopetaloides is the only species restricted to the coastal habitat.

In Terengganu, this species can be found in few populations with many individuals along the sand banks at the unique BRIS soil ecosystem of Tasik Kg. Jambu Bongkok, Marang. It is a herbaceous plant with large lobed leaves, easily identified by the lion-like character of the petals, bearing berry-like fruits that change from green to orangey in colour when matured, underground rounded-structure for food storage called tuber and can grow more than 2 meters tall. The matured plants are capable to produce fruits all year round while their tubers can weigh up to 1 kg. Continuous development of both plant structures also served as the species survival strategies as they allow the production of new individuals.

Tacca leontopetaloides has been synonym as food source and as main ingredients in numerous ethnomedicines. Their stems and tubers are reported to be edible (when properly prepared) while the seed coat is noted to be sweet. However, its tuber is noted to be the most appreciated part mainly for the high starch content. On the other hand, the species is also used to treat several stomach ailments including to remove excessive gas after childbirth using roots decoction.

Although the plant is beneficial, there is no documentation on the species utilization by the local community of Kg. Jambu Bongkok. However, its natural habitat is observed to be threatened by unprecedented drastic physical changes from anthropogenic activities and microclimatic changes. With that, although the current status of the Tacca leontopetaloides populations are considered as protected, they are anticipated to be depleted in a short period of time. Therefore, the local community must be educated on the presence of this hidden gem to ensure their number will keep increasing for years to come.

Source: Akmal Raffi (PhD), akmalraffi@umt.edu.my - Institute of Tropical Biodiversity and Sustainable Development (BIO-D TROPIKA)
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