If you are looking for the university that has many bubbblemaker experts, UMT should be in your radar. UMT is one of the public universities in Malaysia that has many experienced SCUBA divers. The SCUBA divers in UMT are actively engaged with three diving activities as professional, recreational and scientific scuba diving. Four individuals who are involved in SCUBA diving activities in UMT are from different backgrounds.

Mr. Baharim Bin Mustapha is one of the all-timer professional divers at UMT. He has been involved in scuba diving activities for more than 20 years. Interestingly, he has also been professional diver for several top diving agencies in Malaysia including NAUI, PADI, SDI and RAID within that period of time. Relying on this long journey experience, he and his team are trying to establish a complete ISO-certified scuba diving manual for UMT.

Besides, Mr. Borhanudin Bin Mohd Yusof @ Mohamed is another professional diving figure in UMT, but he tends to get involved in recreational diving especially underwater photography. The photos that he takes has the esthetic values and are frequently used in the published materials of UMT. Mr. Borhan has been regularly invited as speaker to share tips in taking underwater photos. His obsession in underwater photography has led him to explore several world class diving spots.

Apart from Mr. Baharim and Mr. Borhanudin, Mrs. Rafidah Razali is one of the active lady divers in UMT who has a Dive Master license. She has been attending instructorship course under SDI and it is hoped that soon she will be the first female diving instructor at UMT. She is very good in managing the scuba diving activities in UMT Marine Nature Station at Bidong Island. She is also one of the key persons in the establishment of the Diving and Archeology Unit at the Central Laboratory.

Lastly, Associate Professor Dr. Zainuddin Bachok is a prominent scientist of UMT in coral reef studies in Malaysia. His research interest is related to ecology of coral reef, mangrove and soft-bottom habitat. The latest topic of his research is focusing on the coral reef ecosystem resilience by accessing their trophic level, community structure and regulation of organic sources in food web.

All UMT community hopes that scuba diving activities in UMT will develop from time to time and become one of the UMT strengths that can be highlighted internationally one day.
A PhD thesis takes hours to be presented and understood. Filled with technical and scientific terms, delivering it to attract the listener can be a challenge. Can a student engage the audience? Can they stimulate the audience’s interest to their PhD thesis? Can they explain the details of their research in just 3 minutes?

Introduced by the University of Queensland, the idea for the Three Minute Thesis (3MT) Competition was adopted through an event when the state of Queensland was suffering severe drought that the residents were encouraged to time their showers, causing many people to fix a three minute egg timer to the wall in their bathroom! Using this brilliant idea, the university was the first to organise a competition where the students have to effectively explain their research in 3 minutes in a language appropriate to a non-specialist audience.

With the aim to cultivate student’s academic, presentation and research communication skills, UMT’s Postgraduate Management Centre (PPS) has continued the practice by organising 3MT competition for 2019. The competition which took place on 30th April 2019 was officiated by the Director of PPS on behalf of the Honourable Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic & International). The competition this year witnessed 20 entries in 3 categories: Science and Technology, Social Sciences and Engineering. Also, this year, the international postgraduate students also participated in the competition. The passionate presentations by all contestants ended with victory for Mohd Ulul Ilme bin Ahmad Nazri (School of Fundamental Science-PPSA) with his thesis ‘Alzheimer’s: There Are Hopes’ bagging the first place and taking home a handsome prize of RM500. The second place was awarded to Norhana binti Mat Nawai (School of Social and Economic Development - PPSE), and the third place was Aaqillah Amr binti Mohd Amran (Institute of Tropical Aquaculture - AKUATROP). The three winners will be competing at the National Level 3MT competition which will be held at Sultan Idris Education University on 25th June 2019. Good luck to all three contestants!
UMT congratulates Dr. Safwan Mohd Nor on being awarded the Best Paper Award at the 6th International Conference of Banking and Finance held in Chiang Mai University, Thailand (29th March to 1st April 2019), which was co-organized by Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM) and Chiang Mai University, with sponsorships from CIMB Bank, Stock Exchange of Thailand, SCB Asset Management and Elsevier (Holland). His research paper entitled “Multifractals and technical trading rules: a case of S&P/NZX 20 index constituents” showed how the amalgamation of econophysics with behavioural finance can generate significant returns and superior outcome to the passive benchmark strategy, even after considering appropriate risk measures.

A Registered Financial Planner (RFP), Dr. Safwan holds a PhD in finance from Victoria University, Australia and Master of Financial Analysis from La Trobe University, Australia. His main research interests lie in the areas of investment strategies, market efficiency, portfolio diversification and financial optimization.

Dr. Safwan is the RHB Islamic Endowed Scholar in Finance sponsored by RHB Islamic Bank Berhad, which is the first industry-funded endowed position at UMT. He brings together professional experiences as a licensed director, financial planner and stock market dealer of finance companies approved by Securities Commission Malaysia and Bank Negara Malaysia. Currently, he is a Board Member (Certification and CPD) of the Malaysian Financial Planning Council (MFPC) and Research Associate at the Victoria Institute of Strategic Economic Studies, Victoria University, Australia.
Dealing with Marine Plastic Pollution

By Rozana Sani - April 24, 2019 @ 11:53am

Microplastics are small fragments of plastic that pollute the environment. Defined as less than five millimetres in size and derived from plastic materials, they enter national ecosystems via runoffs of cleaning and personal care products or the result of weathering and photo-degradation as well as various mechanical forces of products like fishing nets, household items and other discarded plastic items.

According to Dr Yusof Shuaib Ibrahim, senior lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu’s School of Marine and Environmental Sciences, microplastics have a high surface to volume ratio and hydrophobic characteristic which make them an excellent vector in transporting various types of environmental chemicals into the marine food web.

“The chemicals absorbed on the microplastics have carcinogenic and mutagenic effects on organisms. As the size of microplastics is very small, it can easily be ingested by marine organisms, enter the food chain through predation, and eventually reach the human bodies,” he said.

Aquatic ecosystems in Malaysia are also part of this emerging global issue, Yusof highlighted.

“Scientific knowledge on microplastics distribution and its concentration in our environment is vital as part of the national effort to develop effective management and mitigation measures,” he said.

For this purpose, in 2017 a group of scientists from UMT established the Micropopastics Research Interest Group (MRIG) consisting of experts from various field of studies like marine biology, environmental chemistry, physical chemistry, chemometrics, metagenomics, ocean dynamics, analytical chemistry, entomology, and food microbiology.

The MRIG focuses on quantitation, characterisation and method development for microplastics (MPs) analysis and marine debris in order to identify the path and fate as well as to increase the understanding of this emerging pollutants in the food web.

Yusof, who heads MRIG, said the research on microplastics in UMT actually started from 2014 focusing on occurrence of microplastics in marine organisms such as polychaete (marine worms), bivalves, sea cucumber, and commercial fishes among others.

The research later expanded to water, sediment and airborne contamination. Using the baseline data, the MRIG group is now furthering its study on the impact of microplastics to human health.

“The study has been conducted specifically in the east coast of Peninsular Malaysia. However, the expansion of the research area will be widened to compare the pristine, moderate and polluted areas in Malaysia depending on fund availability. The data on this research will be beneficial to the government, industry and public,” said Yusof.

On top of the research, the group is also working on the solution to microplastics pollution such as the development of bio plastics derived from renewablebiomass sources as well as the development of biomaterials that can be used for microplastics clean up.

“In recent years, marine plastic pollution has been attracting increase attention from researchers, policy makers, and the public. In the year 2018, Ministry of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change (MESTEC) has introduced Malaysia’s Roadmap towards Zero Single Use Plastics 2018-2030. The vision of this road map is to promote Malaysia’s sustainable development, balancing the economic growth and environmental protection, simultaneously. The use of single-use plastic will be abolished, and replaced with alternative eco-friendly products such as bioplastics and reusable straws,” Yusof elaborated.

He said UMT’s development of biodegradable polymer is still at its initial stage.

“However, we can foresee the commercial potential of the findings. In this study, we explore the use of palm oil and other edible oils in collaboration with our foreign counterpart. “The development of biomaterials for microplastics removal has also been conducted in our lab. We utilize the potential of using polysaccharides as a precursor or production of biomaterials. The findings of this study is planned to be published by end of this year,” he said.
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(Australian Museum Sydney)

PLENARY SPEAKERS:
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