

UNIVERSITI MALAYSIA TERENGGANU

UMT

UMT NEWSLETTER



Helming UMT, Advancing the Blue Economy Agenda



UMT Welcomes New Vice Chancellor



2nd IFoSAC 2026: Advancing Agro-Food Innovations and Animal Systems for a Sustainable Future



Connecting Innovation and Digital Markets

Menerajui Agenda Ekonomi Biru Negara

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A Word from the

Executive Editor



This October issue of the UMT Newsletter reflects our continuing journey towards that aspiration. With the appointment of Prof. Dr. Suriyani Muhamad as Vice-Chancellor, UMT embarks on a new chapter of leadership, guided by a clear commitment to academic excellence, impactful research, strategic collaboration and the advancement of the nation's Blue Economy agenda.

The stories featured in this issue demonstrate how UMT's strengths extend beyond the boundaries of academia. From pioneering marine conservation and international research collaboration to student well-being, agro-food innovation and digital entrepreneurship, our initiatives reflect a university that is responsive to emerging challenges and committed to sustainable development.

We also celebrate the enduring legacy of our academic community and alumni. The remarkable contributions of Professor Dr. Chan Eng Heng to marine turtle conservation and Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy Mokhtar's achievements in research and innovation remind us that excellence is built through perseverance, purpose, and a commitment to serving others. Our feature on maritime archaeology further highlights UMT's potential to preserve Malaysia's maritime heritage while opening new frontiers of knowledge and professional opportunity.

As we move forward, let us continue to strengthen our spirit of collaboration and shared responsibility. Every research breakthrough, student achievement and community engagement brings us closer to our vision of becoming a leading reference point in marine and maritime knowledge, while contributing meaningfully to the nation and the wider world.

Thank you for being part of UMT's journey. May these stories inspire us to move forward together, build on our legacy, and shape a future of greater impact.

Zukiferee Ibrahim

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HELMING UMT, ADVANCING THE BLUE ECONOMY AGENDA

Stewarding Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) as it approaches its 25th anniversary is a significant responsibility that requires vision, commitment, and the collective efforts of its entire community. UMT has built distinctive strengths in marine and maritime fields. Our responsibility now is to translate these strengths into more meaningful contributions to the nation, particularly through the Blue Economy agenda.



Professor Dr Suriyani Muhamad
Vice-Chancellor
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu

To me, the Blue Economy is not merely about harnessing the sea as an economic resource. It also involves applying knowledge, technology, and innovation to strengthen food security, protect the environment and improve societal well-being. UMT must leverage its expertise to develop relevant, high-impact solutions.

I want UMT to become a national reference point for Blue Economy-based solutions. Our expertise in marine science, aquaculture, fisheries, biodiversity, and climate change must be further strengthened through research that not only advances knowledge but also meets the needs of industry, government and society.

Research success should not be measured solely by academic achievements. Its value also lies in the benefits it delivers, including improving industrial productivity, strengthening food security, conserving marine ecosystems and supporting communities that depend on marine resources.

In this regard, strategic collaborations with industry, government agencies, and international partners must be expanded to strengthen knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and the commercialisation of research outcomes. This approach will enable UMT to develop more practical solutions that address real-world needs.

The Blue Economy agenda requires knowledgeable, skilled human capital equipped to navigate change. UMT graduates must not only master their respective fields of study but be able to think critically, solve problems and adapt to technological advancements and evolving industry needs.

The Blue Economy should also be viewed as a cross-disciplinary agenda that connects marine science with economics, digitalisation, entrepreneurship, public policy and community development. This approach creates opportunities for more comprehensive solutions and new career pathways for graduates.

University-industry engagement must be strengthened from the outset of students' academic journeys through practical experience, exposure to real-world challenges, and collaboration with industry players. This will help students understand how knowledge can be translated into value, innovation and meaningful societal impact.

A clear direction can only be realised when the entire UMT community moves forward together. The university's strength lies in its academic expertise, the commitment of its staff, the potential of its students and its networks across industry, government and society.







As Vice-Chancellor, I want to foster a work culture that encourages collaboration, openness to new ideas, and a commitment to continuous improvement. We must be willing to reassess existing approaches, identify areas for improvement, and ensure that every initiative delivers tangible outcomes.

"To me, university excellence is not simply about rankings or recognition, but also about the ability to deliver benefits that people can genuinely experience."

As UMT enters its 25th year, it has a strong foundation on which to build its future. Past achievements should serve as a springboard for further progress, not a reason for complacency.

UMT will continue strengthening its position as a centre of marine and maritime knowledge and expertise, while serving as a strategic partner to the nation in advancing an innovative, inclusive and sustainable Blue Economy.

Stewarding UMT is not merely about elevating the university's standing, but about ensuring that every strength we possess is translated into greater benefits. With unity, commitment and a clear sense of direction, I am confident that UMT can continue to contribute to national development, societal well-being and the sustainability of natural resources for future generations.





Professor Dr Suriyani Muhamad
Vice-Chancellor
Universiti Malaysia Terengganu

UMT WELCOMES NEW VICE CHANCELLOR

by Engku Nurul Aima Tengku Amri
Corporate Communications Office

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) is set to enter a new chapter in its leadership with the appointment of Prof. Dr Suriyani Muhamad as its new Vice-Chancellor, effective 28 September 2026.

Previously serving as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International), Prof. Dr Suriyani has been entrusted with leading UMT in sustaining the university's pursuit of excellence while strengthening its academic, research, internationalisation and institutional strategic development agendas.

With extensive experience in academia and university management, coupled with expertise in economics, she is expected to bring a broad leadership perspective to strengthening UMT's position as a university specialising in marine and aquatic resources, as well as advancing its role in leading the nation's Blue Economy agenda.



Prof. Dr Suriyani previously served as Dean of UMT's Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Development before being appointed Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic and International) in January 2025.

During her tenure in the role, she focused on strengthening the university's academic ecosystem, including developing academic programmes that respond to current changes, industry needs and developments in the job market.



Internationalisation was also among her key priorities, particularly through the expansion of mobility programmes that provide UMT students with opportunities to gain global academic experience, develop cross-cultural understanding and build networks with international institutions and communities.

Prof. Dr Suriyani said UMT will continue to build on its core strengths while advancing strategic academic areas with strong growth potential.

"UMT has established clear strengths and a distinct identity in marine and aquatic resources," she said. "These strengths must continue to be developed, while we also focus on sub-niches and strategic academic fields with significant potential, relevance to national needs and appeal to students."



"Our priority is to ensure that UMT's academic strengths continue to evolve dynamically and respond to changes in the higher education landscape, industry developments and the country's future needs."

She added that one of the strategic developments currently receiving attention is the finalisation of the Teaching Shipyard, which will strengthen the teaching and learning ecosystem in maritime fields while supporting efforts to develop talent and expertise for the nation's marine sector.

In addition to enhancing graduate quality, UMT's new leadership will also prioritise high-impact research that can generate added value for the university, industry, society and the nation.



Strategic collaborations with industry, government agencies, and international partners will continue to expand to ensure that UMT's expertise, research and innovations can be applied more effectively to address real-world challenges and contribute to economic development and societal well-being.

This approach aligns with UMT's aspiration to strengthen its position as a university specialising in marine and aquatic resources while playing a more significant role in advancing the nation's Blue Economy.

2nd IFOSAC 2026: ADVANCING AGRO-FOOD INNOVATIONS AND ANIMAL SYSTEMS FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

by Nurhidayatul Husna Azman
Faculty of Food Science and Agrotechnology

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu's (UMT) continued commitment to advancing research excellence, strengthening international and industry collaboration, and promoting innovative solutions for a more sustainable future in agro-food and animal systems was reflected recently through the successful organisation of the 2nd IFoSAC 2026.





The 2nd IFoSAC 2026, or the 2nd International Conference on Food Science and Agrotechnology, was organized through UMT's Faculty of Food Science and Agrotechnology (FSMA) at Permai Hotel, Kuala Terengganu, from 9 to 10 September.

Held under the theme "Feeding the Future: Scientific and Technological Solutions in Agro- Food and Animal Systems", the two-day hybrid conference provided an international platform for researchers, academics, and industry representatives to share research findings, exchange expertise, and explore innovative solutions to current challenges in food security, agriculture, and sustainable animal systems.

According to Associate Professor Ts. Dr. Amir Izzwan Zamri, patron of the 2nd IFoSAC 2026 and dean of FSMA, the conference was aimed at strengthening knowledge exchange and translating research outcomes into practical solutions for contemporary food and agricultural systems.

Two distinguished keynote speakers enriched the conference programme with their expertise. Prof. Dr. Amin Mousavi Khaneghah from Ankara University, Türkiye, delivered a presentation titled "Emerging Food-Processing Strategies for Reducing Allergenicity in Functional Foods and Beverages," in which he highlighted emerging approaches in food processing.

Meanwhile, Prof. Dr. Budiman Minasny from The University of Sydney, Australia, delivered a keynote address entitled "Harnessing Digital Innovation in Soil Science for Addressing Global Challenges." He focused on the potential of digital technologies in advancing soil science.

The conference featured 43 oral presentations, including 12 virtual sessions, and 13 poster presentations, with participation from six international delegates and five industry representatives. The presentations covered three major areas, namely Food Science and Technology, Agrotechnology, and Animal Science and Aquaculture, fostering interdisciplinary knowledge exchange and opportunities for research collaboration.

To recognise excellence in research communication, Best Oral Presenter and Best Poster Presenter awards were presented to outstanding participants. The awards were sponsored by Gold Sponsor Maths Proofread (MPR), while Corteva Agriscience (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. also supported the conference as a Gold Sponsor. The conference was officiated by Dr. Sukati bin Sakka, director of the Terengganu State Department of Agriculture.



UMT BRINGS MARINE CONSERVATION EDUCATION TO PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

by Ts. Dr. Siti Tafzilmeriam Sheikh Abdul Kadir
Institute of Oceanography and Environment (INOS) &
Dr. Siti Mariam binti Muhammad Nor
Faculty of Science and Marine Environment (FSSM)

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) continues to lead science-driven conservation efforts to ensure that the guardians of tomorrow are well-equipped to protect Malaysia's precious marine heritage.

The university recently organized the Nature Conservancy Knowledge Transfer programme at Sekolah Kebangsaan Kompleks Seberang Takir, involving 120 primary school students, to transform them into the next generation of environmental stewards.

The event aimed to cultivate a sense of responsibility in the younger generation, turning them into proactive ocean advocates to safeguard local marine biodiversity.

Participants rotated through activities that included trivia challenges on nature's fun facts, an educational game about mangrove litter management, and physical races where they imitated marine animal movements.

Students also learned to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy mangrove nurseries through survival role-playing, explored biodiversity via a creative board game and practiced classifying aquatic life by matching species cards to their respective habitats. This hands-on pedagogy effectively illustrated complex concepts like marine food chains, aligning the initiative with Sustainable Development Goal 14 (Life Below Water).







A unique highlight of the event was the participation of 15 international students as facilitators. They are from the UMT TROPIMUNDO programme, which is an Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree in Tropical Biodiversity and Ecosystem programme funded by the European Commission. UMT serves as one of the global partner and host institutions.

Also acting as mentors and facilitators were UMT's own postgraduate and undergraduate students. The team provided the students with a global perspective on biodiversity and also helped them develop essential soft skills such as communication and teamwork through collaborative interactions.

HEALING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

by Nur Fadhilah Malek, Student Affairs and Alumni

Reflecting its commitment to building a more comprehensive student well-being ecosystem, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) recently brought together 200 students from 20 public universities nationwide for a three-day convention that employed psychological, artistic, and nature-based approaches as mediums for well-being support.



The I-PEERS Convention 2026: Healing with Nature was held from 17 to 19 September at UMT and Bidong Island.

"Student well-being encompasses not only academic aspects but also emotional health, social relationships, environment, and their capacity to seek support when facing challenges," said UMT Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni), Prof. Dr. Mohd Izani Mohd Zain.

Throughout the three-day event, participants engaged in various activities, including an Innovation Competition for Peer Student Leaders (PRS) and Psychological Officers, alongside creative therapy workshops utilizing the R.E.S.T. Art Therapy Module, AD-HTP, Green Sustainability (Lestari Hijau), and Sand Therapy, combining helping skills with art and nature-based approaches. These sessions were conducted by UMT experts.



The convention also featured the presentation of the Healing with Nature Icon Award, recognizing individuals who demonstrated outstanding commitment and contributions in promoting well-being approaches centered on the relationship between human beings and nature.

The recipient of the Healing with Nature Icon Award, Redzmin Bin Mohamed from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI), said that the recognition serves as a motivation to continuously champion well-being approaches that connect emotional health with the natural environment.







"I view this recognition not merely as a personal achievement, but as a trust to continue spreading awareness that nature can be an integral part of our journey in building peace of mind, inner strength, and overall well-being," he said.

The Healing with Nature Pocket Module was also launched during the event as a symbol of the participants' commitment toward reinforcing student well-being agendas and psychosocial support approaches in higher education institutions.

The convention also served as a platform to empower the role of Peer Student Leaders (PRS) in establishing more effective peer support networks across higher education institutions.

UMT CONNECTS RESEARCH, INDUSTRY, COMMUNITY

by Assoc. Prof. Ir. Dr. Sofiah Hamzah
Faculty of Ocean Engineering and Technology

To further promote research culture and industry collaboration, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) recently held a two-day event that brought together student researchers, academics, industry representatives, and the school community under one roof.

The Festival of Ideas@Student Research Day 2026 (FOI@SRD 2026), organized through the Faculty of Ocean Engineering and Technology, sought to achieve several objectives. The event was intended to strengthen research and innovation by providing undergraduate and postgraduate students with a platform to present their research findings; enhance university–industry relations through the exchange of ideas, exploration of collaborations and career opportunities; nurture young talent through knowledge transfer and exposure to technologies such as robotics; and showcase UMT's expertise and contributions to research, innovation and community development.

The festival carrying the theme Sustainable Innovations: Exploring Green Solutions for the Future featured three main sub-programmes: Student Research Day (SRD), University–Industry Engagement Day (UIED) and Nurturing Young Talent (NYT). Together, they connected academic research with industry needs and extended science and technology learning opportunities to younger generations.



SRD provided undergraduate and postgraduate students with a platform to present their research findings and innovative discoveries to audiences and evaluators. Through presentations and feedback, students had opportunities to strengthen their research communication skills, improve their presentations and share knowledge with the academic community.

UIED focused on strengthening UMT's engagement with industry through technology exhibitions, a career carnival, roundtable discussions and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) and letters of intent (LoIs) signing ceremonies. The programme provided opportunities for researchers and industry representatives to exchange ideas, explore potential collaborations and discuss employment opportunities.

Meanwhile, NYT extended UMT's knowledge-transfer efforts to the school community through hands-on robotics and coding workshops conducted by UMT academics. The initiative introduced secondary school students to science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) while encouraging the development of skills relevant to technology and innovation.



FOI@SRD 2026 recorded 274 participants across its three sub-programmes, comprising 114 participants in SRD, 100 in UIED and 60 in NYT. The NYT component also involved students from 11 primary schools in the Kuala Terengganu and Kuala Nerus areas, extending the festival's reach to younger learners.

UMT Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ikhwanuddin bin Abdullah, said FOI@SRD 2026's concept aligned with the Ministry of Higher Education's aspirations.

"The concept was timely, in light of the ministry's call for universities to bring the culture of ideas and innovations closer to the public," he said. "Thus, this year's edition introduced a more integrated festival approach by combining student research presentations with university-industry networking and knowledge-transfer activities for younger generations, bringing relevant parties together in a high-impact knowledge ecosystem."

This integrated approach also provided opportunities to identify collaboration initiatives that could continue beyond the festival.

"FOI@SRD 2026 reaffirmed UMT's commitment to continuously exploring ideas and sustainable solutions," Prof. Muhammad Ikhwan said.





UMT CHAMPIONS NATURE-BASED MARINE SOLUTIONS WITH GLOBAL EXPERT ENGAGEMENT

by Arzura Abdullah
Institute of Climate Adaptation and Marine Biotechnology

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) continues to cement its leadership as a premier hub for marine science by driving high-impact international scientific collaborations aimed at addressing global climate and coastal challenges, and this was evident recently when UMT's Institute of Climate Adaptation and Marine Biotechnology (ICAMB) brought a world-renowned expert into UMT's research ecosystem.

ICAMB invited Emeritus Prof. Dr. Sandra Shumway from the Department of Marine Sciences at the University of Connecticut to deliver a lecture during the Distinguished Scholar Talk session. Her talk was titled "Mitigating coastal eutrophication and CO2: Are filter-feeding shellfish the answer?"

Addressing an audience of researchers, academics, and students, she highlighted nature-based solutions to some of the world's most pressing marine environmental crises. Prof. Shumway emphasized the escalating threats of coastal eutrophication driven by excess nutrient runoff and rising global carbon dioxide levels. She presented compelling scientific evidence on the remarkable ability of filter-feeding bivalves, such as oysters, clams, and mussels, to act as natural bio-filters. By continuously filtering seawater, these shellfish absorb excess nitrogen and sequester carbon within their shells. This offers a sustainable, dual-purpose solution: producing valuable seafood while actively restoring degraded coastal ecosystems.





Building on these insights, UMT researchers actively engaged in strategic discussions to adapt the technologies directly into Malaysia's marine ecosystem framework and coastal management plans.

Demonstrating the commitment to translation-driven science, ICAMB appointed Prof. Shumway as a Visiting Professor to work alongside local scientists. Together, the research team conducted advanced sampling and specialized training under the Higher Institution Centre of Excellence (HICoE) programme across UMT's living laboratories on Redang Island and Bidong Island.

By attracting international scientific leaders to collaborate on its flagship research programmes, UMT continues to set the benchmarks for maritime and marine science in the region. This partnership reinforces UMT's active role in shaping sustainable marine policies, fostering international innovation, and delivering high-impact solutions for Malaysia and the world.







CONNECTING INNOVATION AND DIGITAL MARKETS

by Mohd Hanif Abdullah
Innovation & Commercialization Centre

Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) recently collaborated with Terengganu Entrepreneur Development Foundation (YPUT) to organize the Market Innovation Showcase (MIS), bringing together researchers, entrepreneurs, students, and industry representatives to explore opportunities for turning innovations into marketable products

Held from 10 to 12 September at Terengganu Trade Centre, Kuala Terengganu, under the theme "Innovation for All", the showcase featured research products, university start-ups, student innovations and products from YPUT-supported entrepreneurs. It also included sharing sessions, pocket talks, product demonstrations, competitions and community activities designed to encourage engagement across research, business and industry.

By bringing these groups together, MIS 2026 provided a platform for participants to explore how research and innovation could be developed into commercial opportunities. The showcase also highlighted the importance of understanding market needs, communicating product value and connecting with potential customers and business partners.

Professor Dr. Suriyani Muhamad, UMT Vice-Chancellor, said that university research should progress beyond laboratories and academic publications.

> *"The research must generate products, technologies, and solutions that benefit industry and society."*



MIS 2026 provided an avenue for researchers and students to introduce their innovations while engaging with entrepreneurs and industry stakeholders. Such interactions can help innovators gain exposure to market expectations, identify potential collaborators and consider practical pathways towards commercialisation.

For UMT's student entrepreneurs and research-based start-ups, the showcase also offered opportunities to learn from established businesses and explore connections beyond the university. Meanwhile, the participation of local entrepreneurs provided a broader view of the challenges and opportunities involved in developing and marketing products.





A key highlight of MIS 2026 was the launch of Studio TikTok Shop Live @ Hab Digital Niaga Terengganu, an initiative aimed at helping local entrepreneurs strengthen their participation in digital commerce. The studio is intended to support content creation and live selling, giving businesses additional ways to showcase their products, interact with consumers and explore wider markets.

Nur Azre Abdul Aziz, Senior Director of Strategic Partnerships at TikTok Shop Malaysia, said content-driven commerce and live selling are important.

"They enable entrepreneurs to connect with consumers through interactive product presentations," she said.

She also emphasised the importance of knowledge, practical skills, guidance and suitable facilities in supporting participation in the digital economy.





The initiative reflects an important aspect of commercialisation: developing a promising product is only one step towards bringing an innovation to market. Entrepreneurs must also be able to promote their products effectively, build consumer confidence and adapt to changing purchasing behaviours.

Through its collaboration with YPUT and industry partners, UMT aims to strengthen the links between research, entrepreneurship and market development. MIS 2026 reflects this effort by providing a platform for innovations and businesses to gain exposure, build connections and explore opportunities to bring their products closer to consumers.





THE LEGACY SHE BUILT, THE FUTURE WE CARRY

by Mohd Uzair Rusli, Sea Turtle Research Unit (SEATRU)

She spearheaded Malaysia's first in-situ marine turtle egg protection programme and helped secure stronger protection for critical nesting grounds. Through her research and grassroots action, she transformed turtle conservation in the country, cementing her legacy as a pioneering turtle biologist .



When Professor Dr Chan Eng Heng received the 2026 Merdeka Award for Outstanding Contribution to Environment and Planetary Health recently, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) celebrated more than the achievements of a former professor. It celebrated a legacy that remains active on Malaysia's beaches, in its research programmes and in the careers of conservationists she helped shape.

Professor Chan's work with turtles began in Terengganu in the early 1980s, when questions about leatherback egg hatching drew a young fish biologist into a field that would define much of her life's work. Together with Associate Professor Liew Hock Chark, she went on to establish the Sea Turtle Research Unit (SEATRU) in 1984. What began as a focused research effort became a lasting platform for science, conservation and public participation.

The decisive question was what research could achieve for turtles in the wild. At Chagar Hutang on Redang Island, the team could study nesting females at night while knowing that their eggs might be collected for sale the following morning. In 1993, SEATRU began a long-term programme to protect eggs where turtles laid them. It linked field observations to action: monitoring nesting turtles, safeguarding nests and giving hatchlings a chance to reach the sea.

That work demanded persistence as well as scientific skill. When an early source of corporate funding ended,



More than three decades later, SEATRU continues to show what a small research platform can accomplish when it is sustained over time. Its long-term records help researchers understand changes in nesting populations. Its field programme supports the protection of Chagar Hutang. Its volunteers, students and collaborators carry what they learn into communities well beyond Redang.

The scale of the results is striking. The Merdeka Award commemorative publication reports that SEATRU had protected about half a million eggs from

human consumption and released more than 400,000 hatchlings by the time Professor Chan retired in 2009. By 2025, approximately 1.15 million hatchlings had been released on Redang Island. Behind those figures are decades of patient monitoring and the commitment of people who returned to the beach year after year.



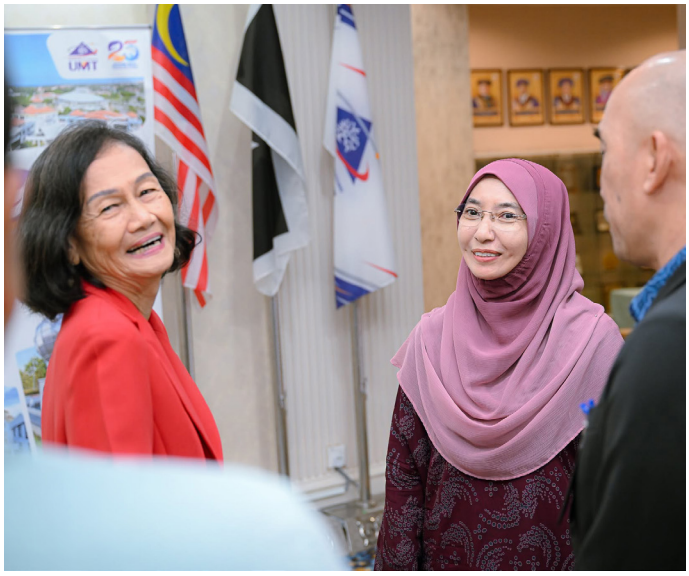
Professor Chan's influence also extends through the researchers she mentored. Former students and colleagues have taken their training into universities, conservation organisations and other agencies, where they continue to advance research and protection for turtles and their habitats. In this way, SEATRU has produced more than findings: it has helped develop people able to carry conservation forward.

The wider landscape has changed, too. Terengganu's ban on the sale of eggs from all turtle species came into force in 2022, ending their legal commercial sale in the state. That milestone reflects years of work by many researchers, conservation groups, communities and policymakers. Professor Chan's contribution belongs within that collective effort: she helped build the evidence, public understanding and practical example that gave stronger protection meaning on the ground.

For UMT and its international partners, her story offers a compelling lesson about research impact. A programme does not have to begin at a large scale to make a national contribution. It needs a question that matters, the discipline to gather evidence over time, and people willing to turn knowledge into action.

Professor Chan has retired from UMT, but the platform she helped build remains at work. On the nesting beaches of Redang, in the scientists who followed her, and in the continuing effort to protect Malaysia's turtles, her legacy is still being written.

To learn more about Professor Chan's legacy and the conservation work that SEATRU continues today, visit https://seatru.umt.edu.my/





UNEARTHING MALAYSIA'S SUNKEN PAST

by Nurul Hamizah Afandi,
Centre for Fundamental and Continuing Education

Beneath the clear waters surrounding Pulau Bidong and Pulau Melaka, century-old shipwrecks lie silent on the seabed. Preserved in time, these submerged sites hold invaluable clues to ancient trade networks, forgotten shipbuilding traditions, and centuries of cultural exchange that shaped the Malay word.



Yet, these precious archaeological resources are fragile. They face a constant threat from marine decay and human activity.

To safeguard these treasures before they are lost forever, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) is stepping forward to lead a new era of underwater heritage conservation.

It is proposing the Bachelor of Applied Maritime History, an interdisciplinary academic programme that integrates history, archaeology, maritime heritage, geopolitics, marine governance, and emerging digital technologies.



REDEFINING ARCHAEOLOGY IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia's growing commitment to heritage conservation has led to renewed interest in protecting the nation's rich cultural legacy. Alongside these developments, archaeology has also emerged as an increasingly important discipline in understanding and safeguarding Malaysia's past.

Often misunderstood as the study of dinosaurs or fossils, archaeology is the scientific study of past societies through the recovery and analysis of material remains.

One area that has experienced significant growth in recent years is maritime archaeology, which focuses on archaeological remains found in rivers, lakes, and seas, including shipwrecks, ports, and other underwater cultural heritage.

For Malaysia, maritime heritage and archaeology is particularly significant because the country's history has always been closely connected to the sea. The Malay World developed through extensive maritime networks that linked communities across Southeast Asia and the wider Indian Ocean.

Recent discoveries of shipwrecks around Pulau Bidong and Pulau Melaka demonstrate the enormous research potential of Malaysia's underwater cultural heritage. These sites provide opportunities to better understand ancient trade networks, shipbuilding traditions and cultural interactions, while highlighting the importance of documenting and conserving fragile archaeological resources before they are lost to natural deterioration or human activity.

BUILDING MARITIME ARCHAEOLOGY AT UMT

The proposed Bachelor of Applied Maritime History reflects UMT's aspiration to produce maritime professionals with a comprehensive understanding of both the scientific and cultural dimensions of the maritime world. In line with the vision of empowering students with holistic perspectives (syumul) and strong interpersonal competencies (insaniah) in advancing global sustainability, the programme seeks to develop graduates who combine disciplinary expertise with ethical values, critical thinking, communication skills and interdisciplinary perspectives. Maritime Archaeology forms one of the key components of this new proposed programme, providing students with the knowledge and practical skills required to investigate, interpret and preserve Malaysia's underwater cultural heritage.

A distinctive strength of the programme lies in its emphasis on experiential learning. In addition to classroom teaching, students will undertake site visits, archaeological fieldwork and practical training that expose them to the methods used in archaeological research and heritage management. This exposure enables students to appreciate archaeology not only as an academic discipline but also as a profession that supports heritage conservation, education and public engagement.



One of the programme's greatest advantages is UMT's ongoing research on the Bidong shipwreck. Future field schools and practical training centred on Bidong Island have the potential to provide students with first-hand experience in archaeological survey, documentation, recording and interpretation. UMT's established strengths in marine and maritime studies further enhance the programme's potential. Supported by laboratories, research facilities and expertise across disciplines, the university offers an environment where archaeology can be integrated with marine science, oceanography, conservation and digital technologies. The programme also aims to strengthen collaborations with museums, heritage agencies, universities and research institutions, creating a network that supports education, research and professional training in maritime archaeology.



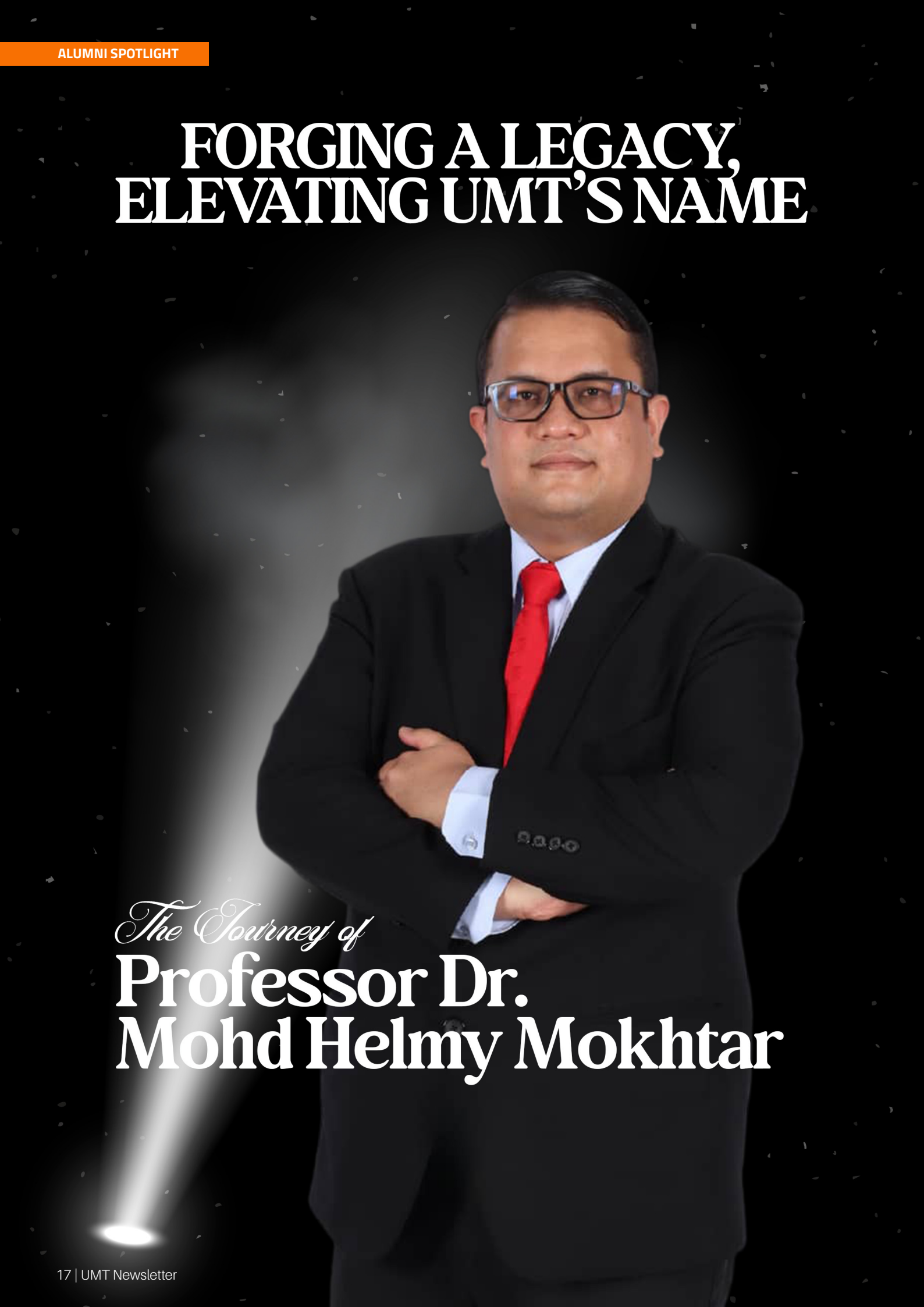
PREPARING FUTURE MARITIME HERITAGE PROFESSIONALS

Graduates of the programme will acquire an understanding of the principal methods employed in underwater archaeological projects, including archaeological survey, excavation, recording, conservation and the management of recovered artefacts. Beyond technical competence, they will develop an appreciation of the long-term significance of marine cultural heritage and its contribution to understanding Malaysia's history and identity. Equipped with interdisciplinary knowledge and practical experience, graduates will be well prepared for careers as researchers, museum curators, heritage managers, educators, policymakers and cultural resource specialists in museums, universities, government agencies and the heritage industry.

As Malaysia strengthens its position as a maritime nation, there is an increasing need for professionals who can bridge history, archaeology and marine science. With its established expertise in maritime studies, growing research on the Bidong shipwreck, interdisciplinary facilities and commitment to experiential learning, UMT is well positioned to become a national centre for maritime archaeology and underwater cultural heritage.



FORGING A LEGACY, ELEVATING UMT'S NAME



The Journey of

Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy Mokhtar

For any university, the success of its graduates represents the true measure of its educational impact. Every milestone achieved by an alumnus carries the alma mater's name into the wider world. The journey of Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy Mokhtar exemplifies this connection, demonstrating how foundational learning can spark a lifetime of research, innovation, and global contribution.

FROM THE UNIVERSITY CLASSROOM TO THE ACADEMIC WORLD



Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy began his academic path at Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT), graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Biological Sciences in 2011. Driven by scientific curiosity, he pursued a PhD in Physiology at Universiti Malaya, completing it in 2016. This solid grounding laid the groundwork for his specialization in reproductive physiology, endocrine health, and natural products.

On 13 August 2026, he reached a monumental milestone in his academic career upon his promotion to Professor at the Faculty of Medicine, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). His transition from foundational biological sciences to high-impact medical research highlights how university roots can flourish into expertise that transforms lives.

RESEARCH THAT TOUCHES LIVES

Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy's research directly tackles critical human health challenges, including hormonal disorders, infertility, endometriosis, and polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS). Notably, his pioneering work evaluates the therapeutic potential of stingless bee products—such as bee bread and stingless bee honey—in treating reproductive disorders. His extensive 2026 publications span male and female fertility, testicular toxicity, and the genital tract microbiome.

Beyond academic journals, his research has yielded notable international innovation awards. At the International Innovation Competition (MJIC 2026), he earned four major honors: the Gold Medal, Diamond Award, Platinum Award (Industries Category), and Special Award (Industries Category). This built upon his stellar performance at MJIC 2025, where he received the Best of the Best Researcher Award and a Gold Medal, proving his skill in converting lab discoveries into real-world applications.

NURTURING THE NEXT GENERATION OF RESEARCHERS

For Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy, true academic success extends beyond personal titles to empowering the next generation. He actively supervises Master's and PhD candidates across reproductive health and physiology. Globally, he serves as Secretary of the FAOPS Education Mission Operations Committee and Co-chair for the FAOPS Congress 2027, shaping medical education across the region.



AN ALUMNUS WHO NEVER FORGOT HIS ALMA MATER

Throughout his rise, he has remained deeply tied to his alma mater. Recognized with the Anugerah Ikon Alumni Akademik UMT (2023), MOHE's Anugerah Alumni Muda Harapan (2024), and the Anugerah Jasa Bakti UMT (2025), he currently leads as Chairperson of the Protem Committee for the UMT Debate Alumni Chapter.

From UMT classrooms to international stages, Professor Dr. Mohd Helmy Mokhtar embodies the spirit of lifelong learning and service, demonstrating that no matter how high graduates soar, their roots remain at UMT.

"The success of an alumnus is not merely measured by how far one travels, but by how far the knowledge and experiences gained can be transformed into contributions to society and the alma mater."

QUICK PROFILE & KEY HIGHLIGHTS

2011 :
B.Sc. Biological Sciences, UMT

2023-2025 :
UMT Academic Alumni Icon & Jasa Bakti Awardee; MOHE Young Alumni Award

2025-2026 :
Multiple Gold & Diamond Innovation Awards (MJIC)

2026 :
Appointed Full Professor, Faculty of Medicine, UKM


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Celebrating
UMT'S 25th ANNIVERSARY
25
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2001-2026
Menerajui Agenda
Ekonomi Biru Negara
Leading the National Blue Economy Agenda

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