

UMT NEWSLETTER

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Ocean of Discoveries for Global Sustainability



In this issue

- ① **A Journey Towards Global Visibility:
UMT Academics Explore
Opportunities in Scotland**
- ② **Bridging Continents:
Strengthening Malaysia-Belgium
Education and Research
Collaboration for a Brighter Future**
- ③ **Roundtable Discussion:
Driving Economic Growth
Through Blue Economy in Malaysia**
- ④ **UMT Off-Campus Student
Committee Visits Indonesian
Universities to Explore
Potential Collaborations**
- ⑤ **UMT-BRIN Partnership:
Regional Excellence in
Marine Biotechnology
and Aquatic Resources**



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As we present this latest edition of our newsletter, I want to take a moment to highlight some of the remarkable strides UMT is making in the realm of higher education and share some of the recent developments that underscore UMT's commitment to academic excellence and innovation.

UMT is stepping forward as a leader in the blue economy, positioning us as a university dedicated to sustainable ocean resource management. Our recent Round Table Discussion on economic growth exemplified this commitment, bringing together experts and stakeholders to explore sustainable practices that can drive our economy forward while safeguarding our marine ecosystems.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate our dedicated UMT academicians. Your relentless pursuits of partnerships with global institutions have resulted in significant collaborations, including a productive workshop with Heriot-Watt University. Additionally, we are thrilled to announce the signing of advance agreements between UMT and three faculties at Ghent University, which will enhance our academic programmes and provide our students with unique opportunities for growth and learning.

Thank you for everybody's ongoing support and engagement. Together, we are shaping a vibrant future for UMT and our global academic community.



Zukiferee bin Ibrahim

Executive Editor

CONTENTS

- 1 A Journey Towards Global Visibility:
UMT Academics Explore Opportunities in Scotland**
- 2 Bridging Continents: Strengthening Malaysia-Belgium
Education and Research Collaboration for a Brighter Future**
- 3 Roundtable Discussion: Driving Economic
Growth Through Blue Economy in Malaysia**
- 4 UMT Off-Campus Student Committee Visits Indonesian
Universities to Explore Potential Collaborations**
- 5 UMT-BRIN Partnership: Regional Excellence in
Marine Biotechnology and Aquatic Resources**

Roundtable Discussion: Driving Economic Growth Through Blue Economy in Malaysia

Mohd Amar Abdullah, UMT Beacon



To identify sustainable solutions and strategies for Malaysia's Blue Economy, UMT has taken the initiative to invite key stakeholders from academia, industry, and government to participate in a roundtable discussion titled Driving Economic Growth Through Blue Economy in Malaysia.

UMT is committed to fostering research and development in the Blue Economy and forming strategic partnerships to drive sustainable marine management, emphasized UMT Vice Chancellor Professor Ts. Dr. Mohd Zamri Ibrahim during his welcome address at the start of the event.

The event began with a keynote speech, delivered by Mr. Timo Goosmann, Head of Section – Political, Press, and Information at the Delegation of the European Union to Malaysia. His speech focused on the global significance of the blue economy and the EU-ASEAN collaboration on sustainable maritime practices.

The event transitioned into a forum, featuring a distinguished panel, including Professor Dr. Mohd Khusairi Rajuddin (Adjunct Professor at UCSI, Senior Associate at MIGHT), Dr. Mohd Afzanizam Abdul Rashid (Chief Economist at Bank Muamalat Malaysia), and Professor Ts. Dr. Mohd Zamri Ibrahim (Vice Chancellor of UMT).

Topics centred around sustainable fisheries, renewable ocean energy, and maritime innovation, with panellists emphasizing the Blue Economy's immense potential to contribute significantly to Malaysia's GDP. They noted that strategic development of the Blue Economy could not only enhance coastal livelihoods and create thousands of new jobs in marine sectors, but also attract domestic and foreign

investments, particularly in marine conservation, renewable energy, and eco-tourism. The panellists stressed the need for Malaysia to align its policies with sustainable development goals (SDGs) to fully leverage the in potential economic gains over the coming decades. Balancing economic growth with environmental stewardship, the forum highlighted how the Blue Economy could be a critical driver of Malaysia's future prosperity.

A Round Table Discussion was held next, with participants divided into five groups, each focusing on the different aspect of the blue economy, namely sustainable fisheries and aquaculture, sustainable marine ecosystems, blue energy, maritime ports and shipping, and blue economy entrepreneurship.

One of the major highlights of the event was the official launch of UMT's Blue Economy Advancement Centre (UMT BEACON) by Professor Dr. Mohamad Salmi Mohd Sohod, Chairman of UMT's Board of Directors. Also launched were two publications, UMT Blue Economy Book, a collaborative effort between UMT and the Maritime Institute of Malaysia (MIMA), and Malaysia Marine Ecological Gap Assessment Report, co-produced by UMT and the Department of Fisheries.

Additionally, UMT signed a Memorandum of Understanding with MIMA and another with PLANMalaysia to strengthen collaborations between the institutions in areas such as maritime policy development and marine sustainability. At the event, UMT also exchanged a Letter of Intent (LOI) with Sabah Maju Jaya to enhance cooperation in sustainable marine development and blue economy initiatives, particularly in Sabah.

A Journey Towards Global Visibility: UMT Academics Explore Opportunities in Scotland

Dr. Siti Nur Tahirah Jaafar, Faculty of Marine Science and Environment



A group of UMT academics was recently invited by Heriot Watt University (HWU) to visit Scotland and jointly participate in a collaborative programme involving research workshops and fieldworks organized by the university.

For the first activity upon their arrival, the UMT academics met with Marine Alliance for Science and Technology for Scotland (MASTS), a consortium that includes 18 organizations with a membership of over 800 marine science researchers throughout Scotland. Also present at the meeting held at the Scottish Oceans Institute, St. Andrew's University, were MASTS Director of Operations, Dr Mark James, and Programme Coordinator/Deputy Dean of St. Andrew's University Graduate School, Dr Emma Defew. The purpose of the meeting was to aim for new collaborations in related fields and outline the direction of the cooperation between the two parties. Both sides agreed to further discuss online specific research collaborations and appropriate methods for student mobility.

UMT researchers then attended the Orkney International Science Festival, held around Orkney. At the Orkney Theatre, KGS, Kirkwall, UMT's Prof. Dr. Marinah Mohd Ariffin and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Hafiz Borkhanuddin shared about the social activities carried out by UMT with the Terengganu community and industry.

On the fourth day of their visit, all UMT researchers, namely Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jarina Jani, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tan Chun Hong, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hafiz Borkhanuddin, Dr. Siti Nur Tahirah, and

Mr. Mohd Yusri Yusof, delivered a talk in their respective fields of expertise at the Robert Rendall Building, International Centre for Island Technology (ICIT), HWU, Stromness. The talks were warmly received by the locals. While at ICIT, UMT and HWU renewed their existing MOU to continue strengthening their cooperation.

The UMT delegation was also invited to partner with the island community of Papa-Westray in North Orkney. The UMT researchers are believed to be the first Malaysians to have reached this remote island. The programme was organized by Dr. Saoirse Higgins, who, together with Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jarina, was involved in several collaborations with the Malaysian Fisheries Department on the Carey Island project in February this year. At the Kelpstore community centre, UMT researchers shared about their respective research fields.

For the next activity, four UMT researchers, Dr. Siti Nur Tahirah, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Tan, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hafiz, and Mr Yusri, joined HWU researchers led by Prof. William Sanderson and followed the ecological research activities of the native European oyster habitat, *Ostrea edulis* in Dornoch Firth, Scotland. A discussion was held with HWU's Prof. Bill Anderson, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mark Hartl, Dr. Leo Peskett, and Ms. Kaitlin Magliano on potential research collaborations.

Before leaving for home, UMT researchers participated in a community activity in Stranraer, which focused on the conservation of Loch Ryan Area, a natural habitat for the most valuable native European oysters in the world.

Bridging Continents: Strengthening Malaysia-Belgium Education and Research Collaboration for a Brighter Future

Prof. Dr. Yeong Yik Sung, Institute of Climate Adaptation and Marine Biotechnology (ICAMB)



UMT's Institute of Climate Adaptation and Marine Biotechnology (ICAMB) has recently signed several agreements with Ghent University, Belgium, marking a significant milestone in the fostering of global partnerships.

ICAMB signed three Collaborative Agreements with the Faculty of Science, Faculty of Bioscience Engineering, and Faculty of Veterinary Sciences. The institute also signed the Joint-PhD in Biotechnology Agreement.

The agreements were formalized on 8 September during a special meeting when Professor ChM. Dr. Marinah Mohd Ariffin, Deputy Vice Chancellor (Research and Innovation), and Prof. Dr. Yeong Yik Sung, ICAMB Director, travelled to Ghent University.

Following the agreement signing, UMT has also announced about the re-appointment of two distinguished UMT visiting professors from Ghent University, Prof. Dr. Yves Van De Peer and Prof. Dr. Hans Nawynck. Both professors are esteemed experts in the fields. Prof. Van De Peer is currently serving as

the Director of the VIB-UGent Centre for Plant Systems Biology, located at the prestigious Flemish Institute of Biotechnology.

In addition to the formalities, the UMT delegation also engaged in fruitful discussions with Prof. Van De Peer about potential research collaborations aimed at advancing plant systems biology and biotechnology.

To top off the visit, Prof. Marinah and Prof. Yeong also participated in LARVI 2024: The 8th Fish & Shellfish Larviculture Symposium from 9 to 12 September. This global event brought together leading experts from both academia and industry to address key challenges and innovations in aquaculture.

To push the boundaries of research and innovation in marine biotechnology, UMT continues to strengthen its global presence through strategic alliances, such as the ones with Ghent University. These initiatives are crucial in making ICAMB the third Hi-COE of UMT and in strengthening academic collaborations between Malaysia and Belgium.

UMT Off-Campus Student Committee Visits Indonesian Universities to Explore Potential Collaborations

Mohd Yusmiza Mamat, Residential College, UMT



Taking the initiative to promote UMT to Indonesian students and establish a stronger diplomatic and social relationship with the neighbouring country, UMT's off-campus student committee has recently organized a seven-day trip to Bandung and Jakarta, Indonesia.

The delegation consisted of 15 participants, including students, a fellow, and UMT Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni) Professor Dr. Mohd Izani Mohd Zain.

To achieve their aims, the group visited Universitas Padjadjaran (UNDAP), Bandung to meet with their counterparts and exchange information. While there, Professor Izani was invited to give a talk to about 160 students from the Faculty of Social and Political Knowledge. With these two events, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 – Quality Education has been met. The visitors then took the opportunity to conduct university social responsibility activities at an orphanage, Istana Yatim Daarul Adzkar. UMT students met with the orphans, helped clean the area, and painted the walls. In addition, the group also presented some financial aid to the orphans. These activities enabled SDG 10 – Reduced Inequalities to be met.

The team then visited BINUS University in Jakarta to meet with the students and exchange information. A discussion was held between the management of the two universities

to explore the possibility of establishing a letter of intent, a memorandum of understanding, or a memorandum of agreement to collaborate on entrepreneurship, community, and research projects.

The delegates also took the opportunity to visit Malaysia Ambassador Office and learn about the roles and responsibilities of the Malaysia ambassador in taking care of Malaysians' welfare in Indonesia. UMT students participated in a question-and-answer session that discussed academic and employment opportunities in Indonesia and highlighted issues faced by Malaysian students there.

After the visit to the Ambassador Office, the UMT Student Committee aired a podcast that discussed the roles of Malaysian students and ambassador office overcoming global challenges. The podcast was hosted by Adib Farhan, Off-campus Student Committee President for 2023/2024. Two speakers were invited to the session, namely Prof. Dr. Izani and Dr. Hasnul Faizal Hushin Amri, Advising Minister (Education) at Malaysian Ambassador.

The success of the programme titled Wonder of Indonesia: Student Representative Delegation organized by the Off-campus Student Committee may become the catalyst for more impactful programme implementations in the future.

UMT-BRIN Partnership: Regional Excellence in Marine Biotechnology and Aquatic Resources

Dr. Thirukanthan A/L Chandra Segaran, Institute of Climate Adaptation and Marine Biotechnology



UMT and the National Research and Innovation Agency (BRIN), Indonesia, have recently formalized an unprecedented collaboration through the formation of the Regional Research Platform in Marine Biotechnology and Aquatic Resources. UMT hosted distinguished guests from BRIN, led by Professor Dr. Ocky Radjasa, and Professor Firdaus, representing the Indonesian Embassy, on 23 September.

This strategic partnership aims to fortify joint research efforts, nurture postgraduate talent, and drive high-impact innovations that will address critical challenges in the marine and aquatic sectors.

The partnership focuses on several key areas: joint supervision for postgraduate studies, postgraduate and researcher mobility programmes, joint research grants, and robust research collaborations. The initiative will leverage the collective strengths of both institutions, promoting a seamless exchange of expertise, resources, and knowledge between Malaysia and Indonesia.

By establishing a comprehensive framework for joint research and academic programmes, UMT and BRIN seek to enhance the capacity of their researchers and postgraduate students, ultimately positioning both nations as leaders in the field of Marine Biotechnology and Aquatic Sciences. Researchers will be able to tackle issues such as food security, sustainable marine resource development, and biodiversity conservation through innovative biotechnological applications.

One of the unique features of this partnership is the joint postgraduate supervision and mobility programmes, which will provide postgraduate students and researchers

opportunities to work in diverse research environments. This initiative will not only expand their academic horizons but also foster a deeper understanding of regional marine ecosystems and resource management.

Additionally, the partnership will support joint research projects funded through competitive grants. These projects will focus on key thematic areas, including the development of marine-based natural products, the enhancement of aquaculture productivity, and the promotion of environmental sustainability in marine and coastal regions. The research outputs are expected to contribute significantly to national and regional policies, strengthening both nations' positions in the global marine biotechnology and aquatic resources landscape.

This collaboration will lead to the development of a strong regional research platform that can serve as a model for other ASEAN nations. It aims to produce high-impact publications, create innovative products, and facilitate the transfer of technology between Malaysia and Indonesia. Such outcomes will not only benefit academia but also provide practical solutions to pressing environmental and socio-economic issues faced by coastal communities in both countries.

Through this partnership, UMT and BRIN are setting the stage for a new era of scientific excellence and innovation in Marine Biotechnology and Aquatic Sciences. The initiative not only solidifies the longstanding relationship between Malaysia and Indonesia but also reflects a shared vision for sustainable economic growth and environmental stewardship in the region. With this collaborative framework in place, marine and aquatic research will deliver transformative impacts that extend beyond the shores of both nations.



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