



BELGIAN AMBASSADOR JOINS SEA TURTLE VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

For the past 26 years, UMT Sea Turtle Research Unit, or SEATRU, has carried out various initiatives as part of the efforts to conserve Malaysia's sea turtles. In 1998, it introduced the Sea Turtle Volunteer Programme to allow the public to be directly involved in sea turtle conservation at Chagar Hutang, state-gazetted turtle sanctuary on Redang Island. The programme has been successful to this day, with volunteers from diverse backgrounds, be they local or international, visiting the island between April and September each year.

Last April, two distinguished guests visited the island to join others as volunteers. Belgian ambassador to Malaysia Pascal Hubert A. Gregoire

and his wife Maria Fernanda Dias de Lima Gregoire came to Chagar Hutang Marine Turtle Research Station on Redang Island to offer their assistance in the conservation effort. It was the first time an ambassador has volunteered to participate in the programme since its introduction 20 years ago.

During the programme, Mr Gregoire and his wife joined other volunteers in a number of activities, guided by members of the SEATRU team, including its leader Dr Mohd. Uzair Rusli. At night, they patrolled the beach to monitor the nesting activities of sea turtles. During the day, the couple helped with sea turtle research and conservation activities, including nest excavations and nest checks.

Mr Gregoire said that he would like to congratulate UMT for having been able to sustain the sea turtle conservation project since 1993. "I think the SEATRU Volunteer Programme creates an excellent opportunity for the public to get involved in sea turtle conservation alongside experienced researchers," he said.

Dr Mohd. Uzair said that the SEATRU team was very honoured and pleased to have Mr Pascal and his wife on the island as volunteers. "Their participation will certainly promote our programme," Dr Mohd Uzair said. Mr Pascal was so impressed with the programme that he decided to encourage other European embassy offices to participate in the conservation effort and get the unique experience.

"There's more here at Chagar Hutang besides conservation. This is the best place to learn about local culture," he said.

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NONSTOP QURAN RECITATION PROGRAMME ENTERS THE MALAYSIA BOOK OF RECORDS

A programme taking place in the month of Ramadhan has made it into the record book. The Nonstop Quran Recitation programme that began 17 May and ended five days later on the day of Nuzul Quran has entered The Malaysia Book of Records as the longest nonstop Quran recitation, which lasted for 123 hours.

A total of 500 participants comprising different age groups and categories were involved in the programme held at the Sultan Mahmud Islamic Centre. The Quran reciters included school students, university students, senior citizens, the visually impaired, new Muslim converts, and international students.

During the five days, participants took turns reciting the Quran nonstop. By the end of the programme, all of them had completed the entire sacred book five times.

Among the reciters were eight-year-old Fudhail Iyadh Salman and congenitally blind 23-year-old Mohd Yusuf Mohd Azam. Fudhail said that he started learning to read the Quran at the age of three. "I would like to become a huffaz one day," said Fudhail, the eldest of four siblings. Mohd

Yusuf said that he learned to read Quran in Braille at the age of eight at school. "I want to prove to everyone that having some shortcomings shouldn't prevent us from being close to God," he said.

Sultan Mahmud Islamic Centre Director Dr Riswadi Azmi said that the programme was held to encourage the recitation of the Quran during the month of Ramadhan, also befittingly known as the month of the Holy Quran. "We decided to do something different this time, with the hope that it would lead to better outcome," said Dr Riswadi. "Praise Be to Allah, not only were we able to recite the Quran, our programme is now recognized as the longest nonstop Quran recitation in the country."

At the closing ceremony, UMT Vice Chancellor Professor Nor Aieni accepted the certificate of recognition presented by MBOR representative Mohamad Nazrul Hafizi Ahmad Fauzi. All the participants received tokens of appreciation from Sultan Mahmud Islamic Centre and certificates from The Malaysia Book of Records.

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UMT STUDENTS WIN AWARDS AT RESEARCH AND INNOVATION COMPETITION

Several UMT students competed in the Novel Research and Innovation Competition (NRIC) 2019 at Universiti Sains Malaysia on 19-21 April. Their participation there was coordinated by UMT Student Holistic Development and Counselling Centre. The competition was divided into several categories, namely Life Sciences, Engineering and Technology, Health and Medical Sciences, Social Transformation and Creative Arts, Information Technology and Communication, and Fundamental Sciences. In addition to the main event, the NRIC itself, there were two sub-events taking place. One was e-NRIC, a video-based competition aimed at training students on idea commercialization, and the other was CoRIC (Community Research and Innovation Competition), an idea-pitching competition without product or prototype. UMT students took part in all three events, with three students competing in NRIC, 11 in the e-NRIC, and two in CoRIC.

At the end of the competition, several awards were taken home, including a silver medal in NRIC, four achievements and the People's Choice award in e-NRIC, and Best Presenter award in CoRIC.

In the main event, the NRIC, the project entitled Dio-Nano-Gold: From Worm to New Functional Nanogold by Piong Chong Huai and

Angeline Ung Ee Pei from the School of Fundamental Sciences won the Bronze medal for the Fundamental Sciences category. The project was supervised by Dr Noor Aniza Harun.

In the sub-event e-NRIC, the project entitled Sycop 2.0 Synthetic Conductive Polymer 2.0 by Shobonni Subramaniam and Mhonishya Krishnamoorthy from the School of Fundamental Sciences won the People's Choice award. The project was supervised by Dr Md Uwaisulqarni Osman.

In the sub-event CoRIC, Arunkumar Subramaniam from the School of Ocean Engineering won the Best Presenter Award for his project entitled Driving Cycle Tracking Device for MyBas BT IoT. The project was supervised by Associate Professor Dr Salisa Abdul Rahman.

The international programme organized by USM Student Representative Council saw 58 projects competing in the NRIC, 15 in e-NRIC, and seven in CoRIC.

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UMT AND BERJAYA HOTELS & RESORTS SIGN MOU FOR TURTLE CONSERVATION ENHANCEMENT

UMT and Berjaya Hotels & Resorts signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on 4 May at The Taaras Beach and Spa Resort, Redang Island, as part of the effort to further enhance the conservation of marine environment especially the turtles in this country.

At the signing ceremony, UMT was represented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor of Research and Innovation Professor Dr Mazlan Abd. Ghaffar. Berjaya Hotels & Resorts meanwhile was represented by its Commercial Head Mondi Mecja. Also present for UMT was Institute of Oceanography and Environment Director Associate Professor Dr Aidy Muslim. Mr Mecja was accompanied during the signing ceremony by The Taaras Beach and Spa Resort General Manager Pravir Misha.

Professor Mazlan said that the strategic collaboration with Berjaya Hotels & Resorts would help UMT to improve its quality of turtle research and subsequently enhance the conservation of the threatened marine creatures in the country.

Speaking on behalf of Berjaya Hotels & Resorts, Mondi Mecja said that collaborations with UMT were not something new as these had taken

place since the establishment of Turtle Research Station on Redang Island in 1993. "However, the recently signed MOU reflects a more serious effort on our part to ensure the development of science which can further enhance the conservation of the turtles," he said.

He also pointed out that in 2018, Berjaya built a laboratory facility at The Taaras Beach and Spa Resort, Redang Island, which operates as open laboratory. The concept is the first of its kind in Malaysia, which allows the public especially the resort visitors to observe up close the research activities taking place in the Turtle Lab. They also have the opportunity to interact face-to-face with the researchers who come from the local region and overseas.

The Turtle Lab that is supervised by UMT Sea Turtle Research Unit (SEATRU) has gained national recognition after winning the Gold medal and Judges' Special Award in the Research and Innovation Week competition held 12-13 March for the Social Innovation category.

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YOUTH SKILLS@RESIDENTIAL COLLEGE PROGRAMME ENDS ON A HIGH NOTE

In March, UMT Residential College started organizing the three-month long Youth Skills@Residential College programme for UMT students. The programme that was intended to impart income-generating skills to the students came to a close last month.

During the programme's implementation, four short courses were held on different days. Pastry and Baking was held three times between March and April. Both Barbering and 3D Make-up were organised in April. And Top Cookie Baking, the latest in the series of skill courses, was offered four times, one in April and three in May. All the courses ran on weekends, mostly Saturdays, so as not to interfere with the students' academic timetable.

The trainers were qualified professionals who were brought in through a collaboration with state-owned Terengganu Entrepreneur Development Foundation. At the end of each course, students were given certificates of participation by the agency.

Deputy Vice Chancellor (Student Affairs and Alumni) Professor Ts. Dr Che Mohd Ruzaidi Ghazali said that Youth Skills@Residential College was organized to provide UMT students with the opportunities to acquire unique skills which could be used in the future after their graduation as alternative means to generate income.

He added that this kind of programme would help to reduce unemployment among graduates. "We all know too well that sometimes it is difficult to get a job after graduation due to stiffer competition; so having these types of skills will give the graduates more options to choose regarding their future careers, which in turn will reduce the number of jobless graduates," he said.

The closing ceremony held on 27 May was officiated by the Deputy Minister of Housing and Local Government Datuk Raja Kamarul Bahrin Shah Raja Ahmad Baharuddin Shah. He said that collaborative effort between UMT and Terengganu Entrepreneur Development Foundation would equip UMT graduates with unique skills that would make them more marketable and employable. Echoing what was said earlier by Professor Che Ruzaidi, Datuk Raja Kamarul Bahrain also believed that unemployment among university graduates could be reduced if they have more options at hand concerning employment.

"Being self-employed can be one of the options now that they possess certain skills that can generate income. In fact, the programme has provided early exposure to these students which can be used as preparation for the challenge of the National Transformation Plan 2050," he said.

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About UMTSohor eNewsletter

UMTSohor eNewsletter is a monthly online newsletter, published as one of the platforms to let the public know more about Universiti Malaysia Terengganu. In each issue, we highlight some of the significant and memorable events happening recently at UMT.

UMTSohor is a term coined by the top management as a branding strategy. Since UMT is located in Terengganu, befittingly a local word "sohor" is added to the university's acronym. "Sohor" means

renowned in English. So UMTSohor in essence means UMT is renowned, famous. And if UMT is not already is, it is certainly working towards achieving that stature.

We hope you have enjoyed reading this newsletter, and subsequently marked the calendar for the release dates of future issues, so you can be constantly updated.

