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25 YEARS IN
MALAYSIA

ENCORE: THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES NEWSLETTER



Introduction by Associate Dean Recruitment & Marketing, Dr Fuad Rahmat

Welcome back, dear readers, to a new semester. We gather again at the threshold of fresh beginnings, carrying with us the lessons and light of all we have shared. This season invites us to pause and reflect on the road behind us, to honour the moments that stretched us and the quiet victories that carried us through. The haze drifts across our skies, a visible reminder of fire moving through the air. We inhale literal fire into our lungs. That fire lives in us now, and it becomes the fire we fight in our work. It is the spark of a question, the warmth of community, the light of research that travels across borders. It burns in our classrooms, our archives, our conversations with journalists and policymakers. We step forward powered up, renewed in spirit, sharpened in purpose, ready to embrace the work ahead.

The Faculty's role is to help people examine complex questions, and this issue shows that mission in motion. Dr Sandeep Ray followed Southeast Asian connections across Singapore, Japan, and Indonesia, bringing research, film, and conversation to diverse audiences.

Dr Tiong Ngee Derk shared the science of learning with teachers in India and Nepal, turning research into classroom practice. Colleagues joined an AIPE-hosted discussion with MACC officers on governance and anti-corruption, connecting academic perspectives with public institutions. SPIRE academics contributed to news and radio, offering context behind headlines on migration, elections, and international relations. Each effort carries the fire of inquiry into the world.

This issue also marks the Common Room as a regular insert. It is the voice for the FASS PGR community, and their talent and thoughts deserve to be felt. We also welcome Carmen Tang, our new Faculty Manager, who joined us in September. We send her belated birthday wishes and extend warm wishes to all our October babies. We keep the faith in our shared mission, in the slow and steady unfolding of growth, and in the simple act of continuing. We continue believing. May this semester bring clarity, courage, and the warmth of belonging. Thank you for being part of this community.

Dr Fuad Rahmat

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FASS Spotlight | Celebrating our FASS community

A warm welcome, a belated birthday and our October celebrations

Carmen celebrated her birthday in August, before joining the Faculty in September. Now that she is part of our FASS community, we are pleased to welcome her and share our belated birthday wishes.

August

Carmen Tang,
Faculty Manager
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

We wish Carmen a rewarding year ahead, good health and happiness, and many opportunities to get to know the colleagues who make up our Faculty community.

To all our fellow October babies — happy birthday!

For the year ahead, may your best ideas require fewer revisions, your calendars contain some unexpectedly empty spaces, and your meetings end five minutes early every now and then.

More importantly, may there be plenty to celebrate beyond the work itself, good health, good company and moments that make the busiest weeks worthwhile.

Let's take a moment to share our warmest wishes and make their birthdays extra special. Their contact details are available on the **University's Staff Directory**.

Best wishes from your FASS colleagues.



**Welcoming Carmen Tang,
Faculty Manager, to our FASS
community.**



Research & Knowledge Exchange | External Engagement



Dr Sandeep Ray building bridges through research

Research without borders Following Southeast Asia across places, people and ideas

Understanding Southeast Asia means following connections that stretch beyond a single country. For students, researchers and communities, those connections can open new ways of thinking about history and the challenges we face today.

Dr Sandeep Ray, Associate Professor from the **School of Humanities** explored these questions through a summer of research, fieldwork and public discussion.

On 24 June, he delivered the keynote at the “21st Singapore Graduate Forum on Southeast Asian Studies”, hosted by the Asia Research Institute at the National University of Singapore. His talk, ‘Southeast Asia in the Age of Decentralised Scholarship’, addressed more than 80 doctoral students and early-career scholars as part of the ARI-Luce Collaboratory.

In September, Sandeep worked with colleagues from Kyoto University and Kyoto University of Advanced Science, travelling through four port cities in Honshu and Kyushu. Together, they visually documented the return of Japanese Surrendered Personnel after the Second World War. Supported by a “Sumitomo Foundation grant”, this fieldwork contributes to his next book.

In Semarang, Indonesia, the audience changed. At Diponegoro University, more than 50 students and staff attended a screening of his 2013 documentary, ‘Aceh Rangers’, and a discussion about film, media and ASEAN engagement with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

The visit also included a session with school students at SMA-3 and a Public Humanities lecture at a community arts centre, exploring how media can help communities discuss environmental crises.

Before the semester began, Sandeep delivered an online guest lecture for the University of Wisconsin–Madison’s Center for Southeast Asian Studies Friday Forum series.

Across these settings, scholarship reached people with different questions and experiences — creating opportunities to examine Southeast Asia through research, film and conversation.



Dr Tiong Ngee Derk sharing the science of learning with educators through an invited ELTAI webinar

Learning across borders

Turning the science of learning into classroom practice

Helping students pay attention, learn from mistakes and remember what they have learned is a familiar challenge for teachers. Research offers useful insights, but educators also need opportunities to explore how those ideas might work in their own classrooms.

On 27 September, **Dr Tiong Ngee Derk** from the **School of Education** delivered an invited webinar for the “English Language Teaching Association of India (ELTAI)”, reaching teachers mainly from India and Nepal.

The session explored four pillars of learning: ‘attention, active engagement, error feedback and consolidation’. These offered a starting point for discussing how research on learning can inform everyday teaching.

Dr Tiong reflected on the participants’ enthusiasm and openness to new ideas, and on the value of translating practical research for educators beyond the University.

He also introduced “LEARN — the Language Education, Advocacy and Research Network”, an initiative he leads at the School of Education, due to launch in 2027.

For teachers considering their next lesson, exchanges like this provide space to connect research with classroom questions and consider approaches they can adapt to their students’ needs.

By sharing knowledge across borders, the School creates opportunities for educators to learn from research and from one another.



University of Nottingham Malaysia academics joined an AIPE-hosted discussion with MACC officers on governance and anti-corruption.

Research in conversation

Bringing academic perspectives to governance and anti-corruption

For people seeking more accountable institutions, governance raises difficult questions. How do policies work in practice? What shapes public confidence? And how can research contribute to the discussion?

A recent meeting hosted by the **Asian Institute for Policy and Engagement (AIPE)** brought these questions into conversation with officers from the **Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission's National Governance Planning Division** and **University of Nottingham Malaysia academics**.

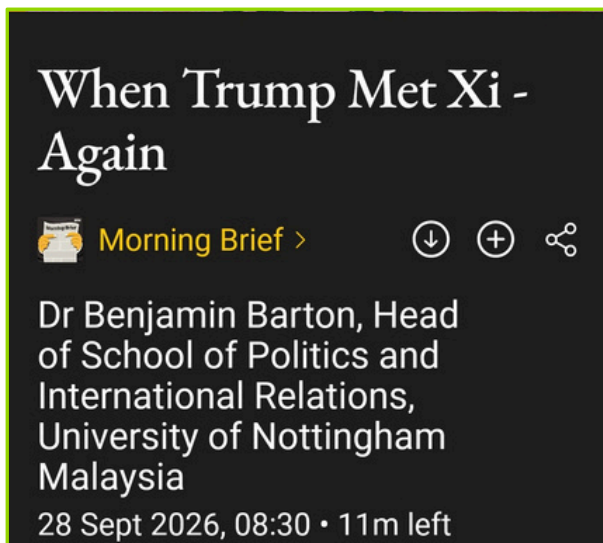
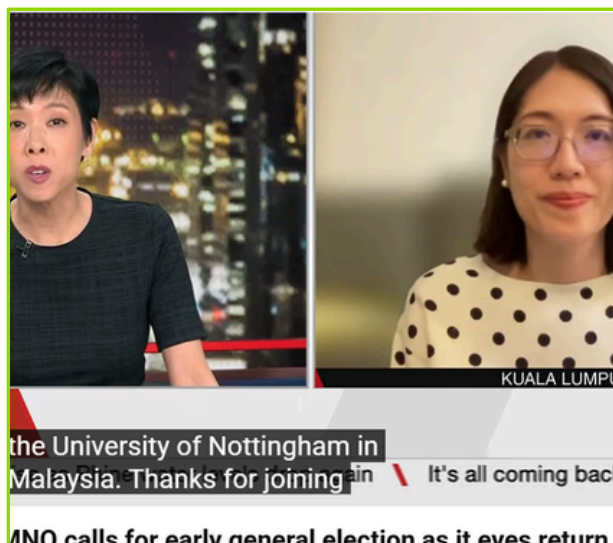
Among those participating was **Wen Li Chan** from **Nottingham University Business School Malaysia**, alongside University colleagues whose research interests intersect with governance and anti-corruption.

The exchange covered governance reform, corruption perceptions and the role of research in informing policy. Wen Li's reflection on the meeting, reshared by NUBS Malaysia, also expressed interest in future collaboration.

For researchers and practitioners, such discussions offer a starting point for sharing perspectives and identifying questions that merit further investigation. They create opportunities to connect academic work with challenges being considered by public institutions.

The meeting opened a conversation about how those connections might develop. For readers interested in the relationship between research and public policy, it offers an example of academic expertise entering that discussion.

Media & Marketing | Thought Leadership



SPIRE academics contributing perspectives to public discussion through news and radio

Expertise in the public square Finding the context behind the headlines

When news moves quickly, understanding the wider picture takes time. For audiences following political developments in Malaysia and beyond, academic commentary can help explain the questions behind a headline.

Recent media contributions highlighted by the **School of Politics, International Relations and Economics (SPIRE)** bring those questions into public discussion.

Migration and public policy | BBC News

Dr Tricia Yeoh contributed commentary on Malaysia's repatriation of asylum seekers to Myanmar, discussing the domestic political context and public attitudes surrounding the issue.

Election debates | CNA

Dr Tricia also shared her views on debate surrounding calls for an early Malaysian general election and its implications for the political landscape.

International relations | BFM 89.9

Dr Benjamin Barton discussed US–China relations in 'When Trump Met Xi – Again', examining what the latest talks suggest about the relationship between the two countries.

Together, these contributions give audiences opportunities to look beyond immediate developments and consider the political context in which decisions are made.

For FASS readers, they also offer routes into wider conversations: read the commentary, listen to the discussion and consider the questions each perspective raises.

Keep the conversation going

Thank you for reading this October issue of ENCORE.

Whether you are planning a lesson, exploring a research question or trying to understand a headline, we hope these stories give you something useful to consider, and a reason to continue the conversation with colleagues.

Follow our Schools and Faculty channels for further updates on research, teaching and learning, and life across FASS.

The Common Room

Vol. 2, Issue 9 | September 2026

What keeps you going when the research journey gets tough? In 'What I Tell Myself to Keep Going', FASS postgraduate researchers share the personal motivations that help them persevere.

Read their reflections on the following **pages**.



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