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25
YEARS IN
MALAYSIA

ENCORE: THE FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES NEWSLETTER



What We Carry Forward

This September, as we turn the page on another summer, we find ourselves carrying forward the momentum of purpose. The warmer months may have whispered of rest, but our work never truly slows. We listen to Indigenous leaders in Sarawak shaping a leadership framework grounded in their own traditions. We translate complex economic questions into conversations that reach living rooms across Malaysia. We examine how federalism evolves as communities seek stronger voices in decisions that shape their futures. And we watch students from around the world learn not just new languages, but new ways of understanding one another.

Behind every story in this issue are people who refuse to treat education as a transaction. They see it as a calling, a chance to ask better questions, to build bridges where divides exist, and to ensure that the work we do extends far beyond our own walls. Whether through research, public engagement, or the simple act of creating space for voices that have too often been unheard, the FASS community continues to show up with curiosity, courage, and care.

This is not a continuation of our deeper commitment to learning that transforms, conversations that matter, and a belief that the ideas we nurture today will ripple outward into the world tomorrow.

Welcome to the September issue. May the stories within remind us all why we do what we do.

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People. Ideas.
Community.

FASS Spotlight | Celebrating FASS staff birthdays

May and September Birthday Wishes

This September, we are delighted to celebrate three colleagues marking their birthdays this month, while sending a special belated birthday wish to our Dean, whose birthday in May escaped our earlier editions.

May

Professor Joanne Lim,

Dean of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

September

Dr Lee Seungyeon,

Assistant Professor, School of Education

Dr Risky Harisa Haslan,

Assistant Professor, Nottingham University
Business School

Salomy Sumithra Krishna,

Assistant Professor, School of Humanities

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.





Listening First: Indigenous Voices Help Shape a Malaysian Leadership Framework

What does leadership look like when it is shaped by the communities who understand it best?

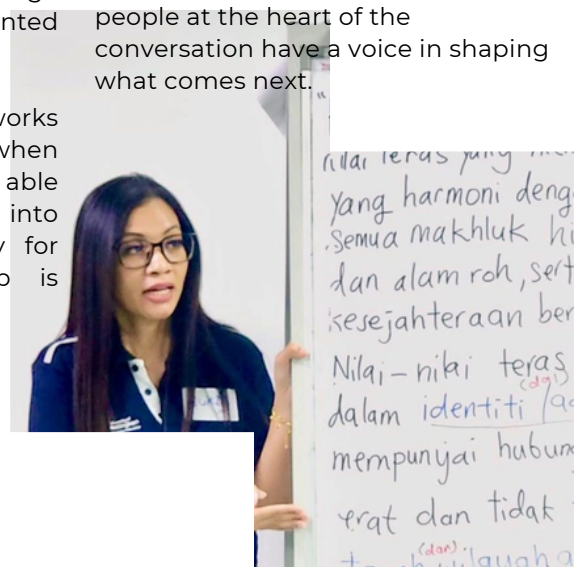
Dr Suria Angit from the **School of Education** recently facilitated a workshop with Indigenous leaders from across Sarawak as part of the School's ongoing collaboration with Yayasan Gamuda. The workshop focused on validating an Indigenous Leadership Framework for Malaysia, creating space for participants to bring their own experiences, perspectives and leadership traditions into its development.

Rather than approaching leadership through a single, predetermined model, the workshop placed Indigenous voices at the centre of the conversation. Participants reflected on what leadership means within their communities and considered how their values, knowledge and lived experiences could be meaningfully represented within the emerging framework.

This process of listening and validation matters. Frameworks intended to represent communities are strengthened when the people whose experiences they seek to capture are able to shape them directly. By bringing Indigenous leaders into the process, the workshop provided an opportunity for community knowledge to inform how leadership is understood and represented.

For the School of Education, the collaboration also demonstrates how academic expertise can support conversations that extend beyond the University. Working alongside Yayasan Gamuda and Indigenous leaders enables research, dialogue and community perspectives to meet in ways that are grounded in lived experience.

The work reminds us that meaningful engagement does not always begin with providing answers. Sometimes, it begins by creating the space to listen, and ensuring that the people at the heart of the conversation have a voice in shaping what comes next.





Economics Beyond the Classroom: Dr Saizi Xiao Brings Economic Questions to 8TV

Economic developments can often feel distant when they are presented through statistics, policy measures and market indicators. Yet changes in employment, prices, household finances and consumer behaviour can have very real consequences for individuals and families.

Dr Saizi Xiao from the **School of Politics, International Relations and Economics (SPIRE)** has recently contributed to a series of 8TV discussions examining several economic issues affecting Malaysia. His appearances have covered the country's second-quarter labour market, National Day economic measures, movements in gold prices and pawnshop activity, as well as the regulation of cross-border e-commerce.

Through these discussions, Dr Xiao helped translate wider economic developments into questions that are easier for the public to understand in everyday terms. In his commentary on the labour market, for example, he highlighted softer hiring demand, youth unemployment and the number of tertiary-qualified workers employed in semi- or low-skilled occupations.

The appearances also provided an opportunity to connect economic analysis with concerns that many people may already be experiencing, including employment prospects, financial pressures, changing consumer habits and the effects of policy decisions on households and businesses.

By bringing academic perspectives into broadcast discussions, such contributions help make complex economic issues more accessible to wider audiences while demonstrating how university expertise can inform public understanding of developments beyond the classroom.

The value of public commentary lies not simply in explaining what the numbers show, but in helping people understand why those numbers matter to their lives, work and future decisions.

Research & Knowledge Exchange

Rethinking the Centre: New Research Examines Malaysia's Changing Federalism

How is Malaysia's federal system changing as calls for greater regional autonomy and political representation continue to evolve?

Dr Tricia Yeoh from the **School of Politics, International Relations and Economics (SPIRE)**, together with **Professor Wong Chin-Huat**, has contributed a chapter examining Malaysia's experience of federalism in the recently published *Federal Theories and Practices: Dynamics of Federalism and Democracy in South and Southeast Asia*.

The chapter considers Malaysia's historically centralised federal system and how the country's changing political landscape is creating new questions around the relationship between federal and state governments. Particular attention is given to Sabah and Sarawak, where calls for greater autonomy under the Malaysia Agreement 1963 (MA63) have become increasingly prominent.

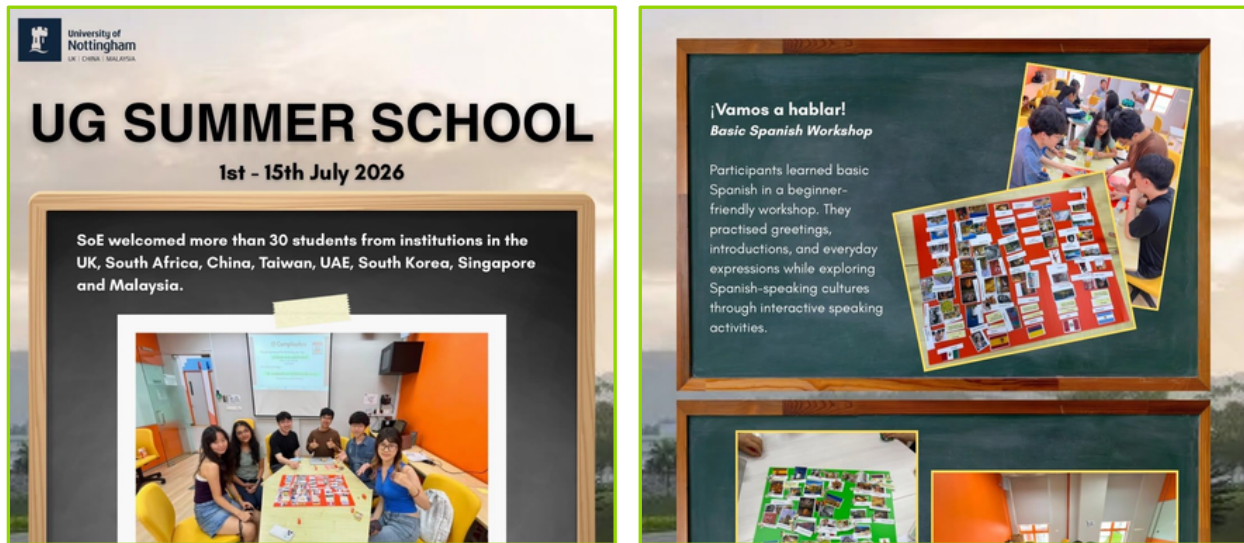
The authors also examine the growing influence of regional political parties and what these developments may mean for Malaysia's continuing process of democratisation. Together, these shifts provide an opportunity to reconsider how political power, representation and decision-making are negotiated within the federation.

By examining these developments through the wider lens of federalism and democracy, the research contributes a Malaysian perspective to broader conversations taking place across South and Southeast Asia.

Understanding federalism is ultimately about more than how powers are divided between different levels of government. It also helps us consider how institutions respond when communities seek a stronger voice in decisions affecting their regions and their future.



Teaching & Learning | External Engagement



More Than Words: Learning to Communicate Across Cultures

More than 30 students from around the world came together at the **University of Nottingham Malaysia** as part of the ***Undergraduate Summer School Programme 2026***, where the **School of Education** introduced participants to new languages, cultures and ways of communicating across borders.

Through workshops in *Multicultural Presentations*, *Basic Conversational Chinese* and *Basic Spanish*, students had opportunities to develop practical communication skills while learning alongside peers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Learning another language, even at an introductory level, involves more than acquiring new vocabulary. Students must listen, interpret unfamiliar expressions and find ways to communicate when words do not always come easily. In an international learning environment, these experiences can also encourage curiosity about how people from different backgrounds understand and engage with one another.

The Multicultural Presentations workshop extended this experience by encouraging students to consider how culture can influence the ways ideas are expressed and understood. Together with the language sessions, the activities provided an accessible setting for participants to practise communicating across cultural differences while building confidence in unfamiliar situations.

For students spending their summer learning alongside peers from around the world, these workshops demonstrate how meaningful international experiences can begin with something simple: a willingness to speak, listen and learn from one another.

Language may provide the words, but communication creates the connection. By bringing both together, the Summer School offered students another way to experience what it means to learn within an international university community.

Visit the **School of Education [LinkedIn page](#)** for more updates on teaching, learning and activities from the School.

Thank you for reading

Another month, another collection of stories from across the **Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences**.

Behind every story are people learning, asking questions, sharing their expertise and building connections, within our classrooms, across our communities and beyond the **University of Nottingham Malaysia**.

Thank you to everyone who contributed, shared and helped bring this issue of **ENCORE** together.

We hope you enjoyed reading it.

See you in the next issue.



**FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL
SCIENCES NEWSLETTER TEAM**

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