

PRESS RELEASE**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
26 October 2026****UBD and SEAFIC Sign MoU to Strengthen Regional Research and Policy Collaboration**

Bandar Seri Begawan, 26 October 2026 – Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) and the Southeast Asian Futures Initiative Centre (SEAFIC) formalised an institutional partnership through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at UBD today.

The MoU was signed by Dr Hazri Haji Kifle, Vice-Chancellor of UBD, and Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul Tengku Abdul Aziz, Chairman of SEAFIC, marking the beginning of a strategic collaboration aimed at strengthening research, policy engagement and knowledge exchange across Southeast Asia.

The partnership establishes a framework for both institutions to explore collaboration in areas of mutual interest, including climate change, environmental governance, sustainable development, business, economics, trade, and investment.

Through the MoU, UBD and SEAFIC will explore opportunities for joint research projects, academic publications, policy dialogues, knowledge-sharing activities and capacity-building programmes. The collaboration also aims to strengthen connections between academia, policymakers, and industry, while providing opportunities for academics, postgraduate students and early-career researchers to contribute to regional policy discussions.

In his remarks, Dr Hazri emphasised the importance of translating institutional partnerships into meaningful outcomes. "For UBD, the true value of this MoU will be measured not simply by the agreement we signed today, but by the meaningful collaborations and outcomes that follow. Through our partnership with SEAFIC, we hope to strengthen the connection between academic research, policymaking and industry, and contribute to addressing challenges and opportunities facing Southeast Asia," he said.

Meanwhile, Tengku Datuk Seri Utama Zafrul shared: "The Memorandum of Understanding we signed this afternoon gives our joint work a home. Every year, attention to haze tends to fade with the smoke. Our hope is that the work we started today continues between seasons, because that is when important decisions are made. Having chaired the ASEAN Economic Ministers last year, I saw how much easier it is to reach agreement when everyone at the table is working from the same facts. Helping our region build that common base of evidence is the contribution SEAFIC hopes to make."

As the first collaborative initiative under this new partnership, SEAFIC hosted a roundtable discussion in collaboration with UBD, titled 'Climate Research and Regional Environmental Governance in Southeast Asia,' with support from the Brunei Economy Programme (BEP).

The roundtable brought together representatives from academia, government and industry to discuss regional climate research, environmental governance, transboundary haze pollution and the role of research in supporting evidence-based policymaking.

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The discussion also provided an opportunity for UBD and SEAFIC to identify shared research priorities and explore a joint research agenda, including potential research publications and future collaborative activities.

The MoU reflects UBD's continued commitment to expanding strategic international partnerships, strengthening the impact of its research and contributing to sustainable economic development and regional cooperation.

About SEAFIC

The Southeast Asian Futures Initiative Centre (SEAFIC) is a Malaysia-based independent policy and research platform focusing on economic development, international trade and investment, regional cooperation and strategic foresight. Through research, publications and policy dialogues, SEAFIC aims to strengthen evidence-based policymaking and cooperation among government, academia and industry across Southeast Asia.

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