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## Expanded partnership to boost radiation safety training

Borneo Post (KK), Malaysia



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**KOTA KINABALU:** Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Department of Atomic Energy (Atom Malaysia) have formalised a five-year strategic collaboration to strengthen nuclear safety, radiation technology, research and development, as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed here on Thursday, builds on cooperation between the two institutions that began in June 2023 with the installation of a Gamma Spectroscopic Water Monitoring Station (GSWMS) at the UMS jetty.

Deputy Secretary-General (Planning and Science Culture) of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI) Datin Safida Zalma Mohd Piah said the GSWMS was the only system of its kind for detecting radioactivity in Malaysian waters and formed part of a regional network for monitoring environmental radioactivity.

She said the station was among more than 80 stations under the ASEAN Radiological Data Exchange Platform (Ardep), which helps establish baseline data on environmental radioactivity and monitor radionuclide releases on land and in waters in the event of a nuclear accident in the region.

Safida said the latest MoU was a strategic step to expand Atom Malaysia's role as the country's atomic regulatory body while leveraging UMS' expertise in technology and human capital development.

She said the collaboration would focus on safety, radiation technology and the strengthening of STEM education, including joint academic research and publications, training and examination facilities, knowledge sharing, and human capital development.

"UMS can also serve as a training and examination centre for Radiation Protection Officers

to meet the needs of industries in Sabah and surrounding areas," she said.

Safida stressed that the initiative could enhance the employability of UMS graduates by equipping them with specialised knowledge and skills relevant to the public and private sectors.

She said experienced Atom Malaysia officers could contribute lectures and technical expertise on the Atomic Energy Licensing Act 1984 (Act 304) and its amendments, inspections, investigations, prosecution, radiological incident response, nuclear security, radioactive waste management, and radiological and environmental monitoring.

She noted that the partnership also supported Malaysia's efforts towards carbon reduction by 2050, with nuclear technology being explored as one of the alternatives for clean electricity generation.

At the same time, Safida said the growing rare earth element (REE) mining sector required proper attention and monitoring by Atom Malaysia where naturally occurring radioactive materials (NORM) were involved.

Safida said amendments to Act 304, which came into force on Dec 1, 2025, were intended to strengthen regulatory oversight in line with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) standards and international best practices, covering safety, security and safeguards.

Meanwhile, UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Kasim Mansor described the MoU as a historic milestone linking the country's atomic regulatory authority with UMS' scientific expertise and research infrastructure.

He said the agreement was not merely symbolic but an operational framework designed to deliver tangible outcomes over its initial five-year period.

"The collaboration today with the Department of

Atomic Energy is a concrete translation of this philosophy, connecting the country's atomic safety regulatory body with scientific expertise and research infrastructure at UMS," he said.

Kasim said the partnership would be driven by four strategic pillars, STEM outreach and public literacy; applied research and knowledge generation; academic enrichment and postgraduate supervision; and human capital development and industrial training.

He said joint STEM outreach programmes would help improve scientific literacy and public confidence in atomic safety regulation, particularly in Sabah and Malaysia.

Under the research pillar, UMS academics and Atom Malaysia experts would collaborate on research, share technical reference data and publish findings related to atomic energy safety and environmental radiation monitoring.

Kasim said Atom Malaysia experts would also contribute to UMS' academic ecosystem through curriculum development, teaching materials, practical supervision and postgraduate examinations to ensure programmes remained relevant and aligned with international regulatory standards.

He added that the MoU would provide opportunities for undergraduate and postgraduate students to undertake industrial training, while also facilitating staff exchanges and technical placements.

"This ensures UMS graduates enter their careers with specialised skills, an understanding of regulatory requirements and strong practical experience," he said.

To ensure the collaboration is implemented systematically, both parties have agreed to establish a joint committee co-chaired by representatives from UMS and Atom Malaysia.

The committee will evaluate project proposals, monitor



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implementation progress and coordinate special working groups according to requirements.

Kasim said the collaboration also supported international agendas, including the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 7 on affordable and clean energy and SDG 4 on quality education.

He said the combination of UMS' scientific expertise and Atom Malaysia's regulatory oversight would strengthen Malaysia's ability to adopt advanced technology safely, ethically and sustainably.

Meanwhile, Safida expressed hope that the MoU would become a catalyst for continuous innovation and generate benefits not only for Mosti, Atom Malaysia

and UMS, but also for Sabah's socio-economic development and the wellbeing of its people.

Also present were Atom Malaysia director-general Noraishah Pungut and UMS registrar Luqman Ridha Anwar.



(Seated, from left) Luqman, Kasim, Safida and Noraishah in a group photo with UMS and Atom Malaysia delegates, taken after the MoU signing ceremony.



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### SUMMARIES

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) and the Department of Atomic Energy (Atom Malaysia) have formalised a five-year strategic collaboration to strengthen nuclear safety, radiation technology, research and development, as well as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education. The memorandum of understanding (MoU), signed here on Thursday, builds on cooperation between the two institutions that began in June 2023 with the installation of a Gamma Spectroscopic Water Monitoring Station (GSWMS) at the UMS jetty.