

GENERAL

UMS Researchers Uncover New Fungus Species at INFAPRO Site

SEPTEMBER 7, 2026

Lahad datu: A team of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) researchers has discovered a new species of entomopathogenic fungus, *Acanthomyces infaproensis* sp. nov., at the INFAPRO Rainforest Rehabilitation Project site near the Danum Valley Conservation Area in Lahad Datu.

According to BERNAMA News Agency, UMS stated in a statement today that the discovery demonstrated the potential of restored forest areas as important habitats for biodiversity, including species yet to be scientifically documented. The species was found infecting adult moths attached to the underside of leaves at the INFAPRO site, with two specimens collected on March 12, 2024.

The statement further explained that both specimens underwent morphological examination and molecular phylogenetic analysis using five genetic markers, which showed that they formed a distinct lineage, supporting the recognition of the fungus as a new species. UMS mentioned that the species was named *infaproensis* after the INFAPRO Rainforest Rehabilitation Project, where it was discovered, and is so far known only from the site near the Danum Valley Conservation Area.

The study, published in the international taxonomic journal *Phytotaxa* on Aug 28, involved UMS researchers Muhammad Shahbaz, Chong Chuan Cheak, and Associate Professor Dr. Jaya Seelan Sathiya Seelan, as well as Ibrahim Ghani Wasti of Kolej Universiti Yayasan Sabah and Dr. Yap Sau Wai of Yayasan Sabah.

Meanwhile, UMS Institute for Tropical Biology and Conservation (IBTP) director Associate Professor Dr. Fiffy Hanisdah Saikim commented that the discovery underscored the importance of biodiversity research in generating knowledge that could benefit not only the scientific community but also conservation efforts and future innovation. She emphasized that every new species discovered is a reminder of the richness of biodiversity in Sabah and highlighted the significance of ecosystem restoration.

UMS vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr. Kasim Mansor noted that the discovery was particularly significant as IBTP celebrates its 30th anniversary this year, marking three decades of contributions to biodiversity research and conservation in Borneo. He affirmed that UMS will continue to strengthen its role as a leader in biodiversity research and knowledge in Borneo.

The holotype specimen of *Acanthomyces infaproensis*, numbered BORH(EF)00008, is now deposited in the BORNEENSIS Collection at IBTP, UMS, serving as a reference for future taxonomic and biodiversity research.