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UM Strengthens Regional AI Leadership at China–ASEAN Innovation Forum

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Dr. Norisma delivering her presentation at the forum

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Building Bridges through AI: Strengthening China–ASEAN International Cooperation

- by Noor Yusrina Hashim, Norisma Idris

On 16th September 2025, Associate Professor Dr. Norisma Idris, Dean of the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology (FSKTM), Universiti Malaya (UM), represented UM at the 13th Forum on China–ASEAN Technology Transfer and Collaborative Innovation in Nanning, China. The forum, hosted by the China–ASEAN Technology Transfer Center (CATTTC) and co-organized by Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), convened senior science and technology officials, academicians, industry leaders, and analysts from across the region.

Malaysia was also represented by Ms. Ruziah Haji Shafei, Deputy Secretary General (Planning and Science Enculturation) at MOSTI, who delivered a keynote address “*Shared AI, Shared Future.*” She underscored AI’s role as the defining technology of the 21st century, calling for its development to be guided by ethics, inclusivity, and trust, in line with Malaysia’s AI Governance & Ethics Guidelines 2024.

A key highlight of the forum was the launch of the Three-Year Work Plan for the China–ASEAN AI-Driven Sci-Tech Capacity Enhancement Initiative (2025–2027). This initiative aims to promote cooperation between China and ASEAN countries in AI technology exchange, industry empowerment, capacity building and talent cultivation and jointly foster an ecosystem for AI innovation.

In her presentation *“Building Bridges through AI”*, Dr. Norisma emphasized AI as a transformative force for innovation, economic growth, and sustainable development. She noted that global AI investment is expected to exceed USD 1 trillion by 2030, reshaping sectors from healthcare and education to agriculture and manufacturing. Asia is quickly becoming a global AI hub, with China leading in research output and ASEAN advancing in smart cities, digital finance, and agricultural technologies.

Dr. Norisma outlined promising opportunities for deeper ASEAN–China collaboration, including the establishment of joint R&D centers, innovation hubs, and open AI platforms designed to empower SMEs and startups. She identified healthcare, smart agriculture, and smart cities as particularly promising areas for cross-border innovation.

Beyond economic growth, she emphasized that AI must also be a driver of sustainability and inclusivity. She highlighted the potential for ASEAN and China to emerge as a global model for AI-driven development aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). AI can help close the digital divide, provide advanced tools to developing economies, and empower SMEs through accessible cloud platforms. Language technologies can enhance multilingual inclusivity across ASEAN, while green AI such as energy-efficient computing, smart grids, and low-emission logistics ensures that innovation advances in harmony with environmental responsibility.

At the same time, Dr. Norisma drew attention to challenges that must be addressed collectively. Issues of ethics and trust, data governance, talent and skills gap, and persistent digital divide, emphasizing that these require regional solutions supported by investments in education, scholarships, infrastructure, and responsible governance frameworks. Concluding her remarks, she stressed that *“AI must not only be a tool of progress but also a bridge of mutual understanding, equity, and human well-being”*.

Besides than given a speech during the opening, Dr Norisma was also involved in an interview session by the organizer, CATTTC. The interview highlights the complementary strengths of China (technology and R&D leadership) and ASEAN (application-rich environments and local data diversity). Collaboration should focus on joint hubs, talent development, and challenge-driven innovation, supported by long-term institutional platforms like the China–ASEAN Forum.

Dr. Norisma further enriched her visit by attending the 3rd Forum on China–ASEAN Artificial Intelligence Cooperation, broadening the conversation to include critical topics of AI governance and collaboration. Another highlight was her tour of the 22nd China–ASEAN Expo (CAEXPO), where artificial intelligence stood out as a central pillar. The exhibition featured a wide array of innovative applications, from intelligent robots and digital service platforms to AI-powered terminal products, showcasing the latest advancements from leading enterprises. Various initiatives under China–ASEAN AI cooperation were also highlighted, including AI for tourism, local manufacturing, and AI-driven service platforms.



Dr. Norisma's presentation during the Opening Ceremony of the forum



Exploring the exhibition showcasing advanced technologies and innovations

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