



**UNIVERSITI
MALAYA**

**INTERNATIONAL ENRICHMENT DAY 2026
WELCOMING ADDRESS**

**11 FEBRUARY 2026
ZA'BA MEMORIAL LIBRARY**

**YBhg. Profesor Dato' Seri Ir. Dr. Noor Azuan Abu Osman
Vice-Chancellor, Universiti Malaya**

Bismillahirrahmanirrahim

- Distinguished Members of Universiti Malaya Management
- Deans and Executive Directors
- Respected Colleagues of Academic & Professional Staff
- Ladies and Gentlemen

1. We are living in a world that is no longer stable, predictable, or linear.
2. In the last five years alone, global mobility has been disrupted on an unprecedented scale. According to international estimates, cross-border academic movement fell by more than 40 percent during the pandemic, while geopolitical tensions, visa restrictions, talent competition, and technological disruption have fundamentally reshaped how, and where the world's best minds choose to live and work.
3. At the same time, global higher education has entered its most competitive era in history. Talent today is mobile, selective, and global. Universities are no longer competing within borders - we are competing with the world.
4. It is in this context that International Enrichment Day matters. Not as a symbolic gesture. Not as a ceremonial programme. But as a strategic statement.
5. Because Universiti Malaya's future, and Malaysia's future - will be shaped by how effectively we attract, integrate, and empower global talent in an increasingly fragmented world.
6. Universiti Malaya may be Malaysia's oldest university, but we are not here to preserve the past. We are here to shape the future. And the future of any world-class university is built on people - diverse, global, courageous people - who choose to make that institution their intellectual home.
7. Many of you in this room made that choice. You crossed borders. You navigated new systems. You adapted to new cultures and ways of thinking. And in doing so, you did not just come to Universiti Malaya, you expanded Universiti Malaya.

8. Because of you, our classrooms reflect global realities. Because of you, our research speaks to international challenges. Because of you, Universiti Malaya is not only recognised - it is relevant.
9. This is what it means for UM to be a global university rooted in Malaysian values.
10. But let me be very clear: internationalisation is not about numbers, passports, or rankings. It is about belonging, contribution, and impact. And that is why today is not simply about celebration - it is also about responsibility.
11. We face a moment in history where knowledge has become the most fiercely contested global resource. According to the World Bank and OECD, international academic mobility has exceeded pre-pandemic levels, with more than 7 million students studying abroad and cross-border faculty mobility rising nearly 50% since 2015.
12. Research investment worldwide has grown explosively - global R&D spending recently surpassed USD 2.5 trillion, with China, the United States, and EU nations collectively accounting for more than 75% of that total. In the domain of frontier innovation, disciplines like artificial intelligence, biotechnology, quantum computing, and clean energy are experiencing year-on-year publication growth of over 20%, while high-impact citations from internationally co-authored research have increased by over 80% in the last decade.
13. Top universities now spend upwards of USD 1 billion annually to recruit and retain global scholars because breakthroughs today are inherently interdisciplinary, transnational, and collaborative. This is not fringe competition - it is a global race for talent, ideas, and influence - and a university's capacity to attract, integrate, and empower exceptional minds determines its and leadership on the world stage.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. We recognise that living and working in a foreign country comes with real challenges - from immigration processes to social security, taxation, and long-term planning. A serious university does not ignore these realities. A serious university engages them directly.
15. That is why today's programme creates a platform for honest dialogue - from the UM perspective - and why we have brought together key national agencies to share the latest policies that directly affect your professional and personal lives here.
16. Because excellence cannot exist without support. And global ambition cannot exist without trust.
17. Beyond today, our commitment continues in ways that go beyond policy and paperwork. Through initiatives such as Malaysian Traditional Sports Day and our Culture Day Trip programme, we are creating opportunities not just to understand Malaysia - but to experience it. These are not side activities. They are part of how community is built.
18. Because universities do not thrive on intellect alone - they thrive on connection, shared experience, and mutual respect.
19. As Universiti Malaya advances its global partnerships, strengthens its international footprint, and prepares for the next phase of its strategic journey, one thing is clear: our international colleagues are not peripheral to this mission - you are central to it.
20. You are not visitors. You are not temporary. You are partners in shaping UM's global future.

21. I want to commend the organising committee for their clarity of purpose and commitment in bringing this programme together. And to all of you, thank you - not just for being here today, but for choosing to be part of Universiti Malaya's journey.
22. Let today be a reminder that while the world may be uncertain, our direction is clear.
23. Universiti Malaya will remain open to the world, confident in its identity, and bold in its ambition.
24. Welcome to International Enrichment Day 2026. I wish you a purposeful, engaging, and truly enriching day.

Thank you.
