

# LEDAKAN KREATIVITI:

## A CALL FOR TRANSFORMATION

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On 31<sup>st</sup> July 2025, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) officially launched its annual Innovation and Quality Month, with the theme Creative Explosion chosen to reflect the urgent need to strengthen a culture of creative problem-solving and innovation across the university. The launching ceremony, broadcasted live via UiTM's official YouTube channel, enabled participation from across the nation and reinforced a sense of unity within the academic community.

This annual celebration goes beyond commemorating achievements. It plays a crucial role in raising awareness among the university community about the importance of innovation and creativity in daily work execution. The initiative provides a platform to cultivate creative thinking in the workplace, enrich operational processes with new perspectives, and enhance the efficiency and quality of services delivered to stakeholders and clients. Through this commitment, UiTM continues to elevate creativity as a foundational pillar of sustainable institutional transformation.

In his keynote address, YBhg. Professor Datuk Ts. Dr. Shahrin Bin Sahib @ Sahibuddin, the Vice Chancellor of UiTM, emphasized that creativity is more than just generating ideas. What matters, he said, is the ability to turn ideas into meaningful impact. In today's competitive and uncertain higher education landscape, he argued, creativity must become an essential element of governance, research, teaching, and talent development.



The relevance of this theme was underscored by the data presented from the IMD–World Competitiveness Index 2025. Malaysia rose by 11 places to rank 23rd out of 69 countries audited. However, the report highlighted a concerning imbalance within one of its four main components: Infrastructure. While Technological Infrastructure rose to 25th place (up 4 ranks), Scientific Infrastructure fell to 35th (down 4 ranks). This disparity reflects the nation's ongoing struggle to bridge creativity in research with real-world application and industrial impact.

This scenario points to a major national challenge. Although creativity and innovation flourish in research and administration, a significant gap remains in translating these into usable applications that benefit the economy and society. Malaysia still faces what is known as the "last mile" problem in which the failure to apply foundational knowledge into practical, scalable solutions.

In response, the Malaysian Productivity Corporation (MPC) has outlined five national strategies to improve competitiveness. These include enhancing workforce skills, accelerating the adoption of digital technology and artificial intelligence, increasing private sector investment in R&D, modernizing business regulations, and strengthening supply chains to expand access to global markets.

Globally, the Global Creativity Index (GCI) provides another critical benchmark, placing Malaysia at 63<sup>rd</sup> out of 139 countries. This index measures creativity based on technology, talent, and tolerance. Research shows a direct relationship between low GCI scores and negative socio-economic outcomes, including income inequality and lower quality of life. This highlights the importance of embedding creativity not just in policy, but in the mindset and daily practices of institutions.

Recognizing this, UiTM adopted "Ledakan Kreativiti" as a campus-wide call to action, a commitment to challenge conventional thinking, derive value from constraints, and embrace unexplored methods. In a post-pandemic world marked by volatility, universities must not only disseminate knowledge but serve as catalysts for new ideas and actionable solutions. Supporting this narrative, a Forbes article dated 24 July 2024 by Janine McLachlan, referencing a study by Harvard Business Review, found that lagging organisations tend to neglect recognition for creativity and fail to engage leadership in supporting innovative thinking. While 91 percent of respondents agreed that creative thinking is a core trait in today's workforce, only a minority of organisations provided space and recognition for creative efforts. Furthermore, 72 percent of respondents believed their leaders were not sufficiently involved in fostering creativity at work.

Creativity is no longer a secondary attribute but a fundamental necessity in today's professional and academic landscapes. As articulated in the Vice Chancellor's speech, *"Creativity is the engine of innovation, and leaders at all levels must prioritise nurturing this mindset within their respective departments."* He further stressed the importance of acknowledging and rewarding creative contributions, stating that leaders must *"recognise and reward unique ideas and new approaches to work, so that those who generate them understand their contributions are valued."* Through this initiative, UiTM reaffirms its commitment to building a community where creativity is embedded as a shared cultural norm and institutional priority.