

## PROFESSOR MASHITAH MOHD YUSOFF, Physical Organic Chemist

Mashitah Mohd. Yusoff was born in Bukit Mertajam (Pulau Pinang) in 1962, an only child of retired civil servants. After completing early education at the Convent School and then the Science School in Bukit Mertajam, she left for the United States to study chemistry.

Receiving early exposure to physical organic chemistry via ER Talaty (alumni of the Woodward school) at Wichita State led her to a comprehensive study of the modes of ring-opening of  $\alpha$ -lactams, highly strained heterocycles which are important precursors in biosynthetic processes. She also had a stint in WJ Kelly's lab while the latter was in Kalamazoo. Kelly had worked on single electron transfer reactions with Nathan Kornblum (also alumni of the Woodward school).

Joining Universiti Malaysia Sabah in 1998, she embarked on natural products research. As Deputy Director of the Institute for Tropical Biology & Conservation, she participated with national and international scientists in research activities centered on the rainforest and her communities.

She came aboard the then University College of Engineering & Technology Malaysia in August 2005 as Professor at the Faculty of Chemical & Natural Resources Engineering and pioneer Director of the Research Management Center. In March 2007, she became pioneer Dean of Graduate Studies.

In early 2008, her team wrote a proposal for the Faculty of Industrial Sciences & Technology. In a life filled with many firsts, she was appointed Dean when the new faculty was approved by the Ministry of Higher Education.

She excitedly speaks of new facilities to be built in Gampang during the 10th Malaysian Plan. She believes the multidiscipline team at FIST can become the catalyst for new approaches in teaching and R&D, to produce a novel breed of knowledge science and technology professionals for the New Economy. She also looks forward to the launching of the Pahang Biodiversity Biotechnology Strategic Action Plan for which she was lead writer.

Mashitah is a registered chemist with the Malaysian Institute of Chemistry and member of the Malaysian Natural Product Society, Malaysian Society of Tropical and Parasitology Medicine, and the Society for Medicinal Plant and Natural Product Research. A lifetime member of St John Ambulance Malaysia, she was previously State Superintendent of Nursing (Sabah).

