NEWCASTLE University has conferred an honorary doctor of science on Datuk Seri Dr Zaini Ujang in recognition of his significant contributions to his field of study.

Receiving it during Newcastle University Medicine Malaysia’s (NUMed) fifth congregation last month, Dr Zaini said: “I am very proud to be a recipient of an
honorary doctorate from my alma mater, an institution close to my heart.”

Newcastle University vice-chancellor and president Prof Chris Day presided over the event where a total of 126 students received their scrolls.

Dr Zaini pursued chemical engineering for his undergraduate studies at Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) before branching out into environmental engineering for his postgraduate studies, completing his Master of Science (Environmental Engineering) and PhD at Newcastle University in the United Kingdom.

Dr Zaini has been instrumental in environmental management and education in Malaysia since the late 1980s.

After his doctoral studies at Newcastle University in 1996, he served at as an academic at UTM and later vice-chancellor from 2008 to 2013.

He has also served as secretary-general at three ministries. His name is synonymous with water and environmental sustainability.

His latest book, which is his 35th, “Eco-Shift: Holistic Transformation towards Environmental Sustainability” has a lot to do with his experience and understanding on science, technology, policy and financing for the environmental sector.

Dr Zaini said Eco-Shift is about change that includes the attitudes, habits, behaviours and cultural transformation towards environmentally-friendly and sustainable development.

“Change is about taking action by proper implementation, not about abstract ideals or philosophical theories,” he said.

Eco-Shift is not a textbook, that discusses the origins of processes involved in a change, he added.

“On the contrary, it is a summary of experiences and examples based on my understanding on transformative change that I’ve gone through in academia and ministerial settings,” he said.

The book is part of the UTM Endowment Initiative. Profits will be used to fund selected students to cover their tuition fees and living expenses.

Dr Zaini began thinking seriously, reflecting and lecturing about Eco-Shift in 2016. Prior to that, his major theme has always been about eco-strategy.

However after attending the Conference of the Parties (COP) - United Nations Framework Convention on Climatic Change (UNFCC), COP22 in Marrakech in September 2016, Dr Zaini realised that the critical success factors for the Sustainable Development Goals to be implemented is by taking action.

“There are many other topics that I would like to include in this book but I tried to make it as concise as possible to allow readers to complete the reading process in a short period of time.

“In addition, I tried to use as many graphics as possible,” he added.

A professional engineer and a fellow to 10 learned professional and academic institutions, Dr Zaini regards himself as an eco-shifter.

He is the prestigious Merdeka Award’s first recipient for the category of Outstanding Scholastics Achievement, and previously chaired the Environmental Quality Council and is the founding member of the National Commission of Water Services. He was also instrumental in developing the national blueprints for higher education and green technology.

He is passionate about horseback riding, jungle trekking and cycling.

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Education, Zaini Ujang, Eco Shifter, Honorary Degree