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KUDOS FOR UNIMAS

KUCHING: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak's (UNIMAS) research and findings on peat soil conditions in Sarawak has drawn praises from Professor Dr Peter M Jarret, a world renowned authority on soft soil studies.

"UNIMAS is on the right track with its studies and research on peat soil conditions in Sarawak. This is indeed an important step towards acquiring a local knowledge-base on this important subject," said Dr Jarret when asked after launching of the "Conference on recent advances in soft-soil engineering" on Wednesday.

He also said for areas of progressive urban development like this city, considerable economic advantage can be obtained by prior long-term planning to allow regional pre-compression to occur in a planned and orderly manner.

The Professor from the Royal Military College in Canada, also presented a paper entitled "Recent developments in the design and construction on peats and organic soil."

In his lecture, Dr Jarret emphasised the fact that peat and organic soils are the ultimate soft soils in engineering terms.

"They are subject to instability and massive primary long-term consolidation settlements when subjected to even moderate load increases," he said.

"Where possible, engineers seek to avoid building on them as soft soils are difficult to sample and test using normal soil techniques," adding that construction on peat and organic soils is still not easy but recent advances in soft soil technology have made it somewhat more manage-

able.

He said construction on peat soils are more expensive and complex but it can be done and the quality of construction differs with the requirements.

Dr Jarret said any site investigations involving organic soils must involve content of all forms of organic soil and the degree of humification of peats.

"A rational engineering classification system must also be adopted for soils with an organic content," he stressed.

Some 200 participants from Malaysia and neighbouring countries are attending the three-day conference, where a total of 34 technical papers are presented by authors from 12 different countries including Canada, the United States of America, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and Australia.