

# UNIMAS sets up IDEA to support industry

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KUCHING - Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) has established the Institute of Design and Ergonomics Application, or in short IDEA, which will catalyse the development of design and ergonomics capabilities to support industry.

In announcing this yesterday, UNIMAS Vice-Chancellor Prof Dato Dr Zawawi Ismail said the university offered the best platform for IDEA's implementation, given the available knowledge specialisms and expertise which could be optimised through specific R&D activities.

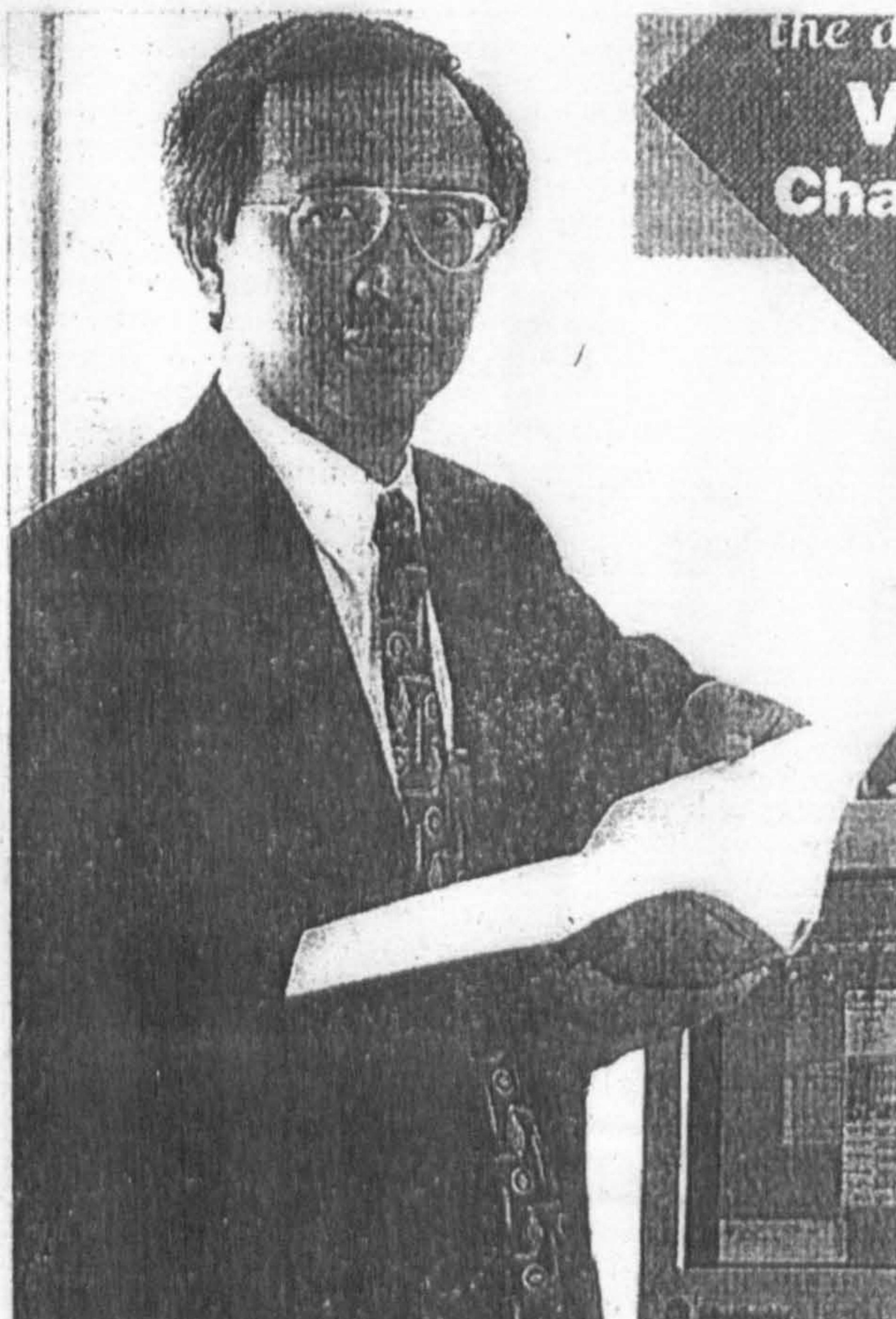
Prof Dato Dr Zawawi was optimistic that through quality scientific research and consultancy, IDEA could be an internationally-renowned resource for ergonomic design solutions to global problems and that the capability generated through education and training initiatives could be applied to industries.

According to him, IDEA aims "to become a prime resource centre in Southeast Asia for research, information and training in ergonomics and design," adding that its establishment was timely.

Prof Dato Dr Zawawi further clarified: "Among the factors which motivate the setting up of IDEA is Malaysia's rapid economic growth which is expected to grow much more this year and in future years."

To sustain such a performance, we need to undertake several steps in enhancing productivity, competition, innovation and creativity in all sectors of the economy, especially in manufacturing, construction and services."

Against the economic scenario of the country,



Prof Dato' Dr Zawawi Ismail

the role of design was apparent in increasing industrial competitiveness, added Prof Dato Dr Zawawi, although this comparative advantage was seldom realised.

He also said: "The relationship between industrial design practices and ergonomics is not well understood by many although both are inextricably linked in generating designs which meet user requirements."

IDEA will be working closely with the relevant faculties and research institutes in the university and also with outside organisations. The institute will offer academic programmes and professional training on industrial design and ergonomics, in addition to conducting R&D activities.

IDEA will also offer consultancy services to local vendors through the transfer of technology activities, particularly in user-system interface design, and the provision of ergonomics intervention programmes.

In its effort to strengthen networking with overseas institutions in the field of design and ergonomics, UNIMAS has already concluded Memoranda of Understanding with Ergonomics and HCI Unit of the University of London, and with the Division of Industrial Ergonomics, Linkoping Institute of Technology, Sweden.

IDEA will also be appointing ergonomics and design experts on its International Advisory Panel.