



OFFICIALLY OPENED ... Dr Chan beating a gong to officiate Entech2003 as Dr Yusof Hadi (left) and Thian-look on.

Engineering research centre for Sarawak

KUCHING: An engineering research centre will be set up in Kota Samarahan soon to encourage research and project collaboration between universities and the related industries.

Deputy Chief Minister Tan Sri Datuk Amar Dr George Chan said yesterday the centre would serve as a coordinating body between the industries and the universities.

"We have to start a research fund first before setting up the centre ... the funding would come from the State and probably Federal governments," he told reporters after officiating at the Engineering and Technology Conference 2003 (EnTech2003) organised by Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) here yesterday.

Dr Chan said the fund would assist potential researchers to start their work as presently the main problem was funding.

On research, he said there were vast areas for research and some of them had been started by the educational institutions such as Curtin

University in Miri on soft soil engineering.

Earlier in his speech, he said Sarawak needed at least an additional 10,000 engineers in the next ten years due to the rapid development that would take place in the State.

He said the large development projects included the Bakun hydroelectric project, Borneo coastal highway, flood mitigating systems and the construction of new federal administrative centre.

"I hope the Bakun hydroelectric project will encourage the transfer of technology which will benefit our local engineers and technologists to harness our resources.

"There is also the construction of the Borneo coastal highway which will link the northern part of Sarawak to the south along its coastline to connect the many communities and major towns dotting it," he said.

Dr Chan expressed his hope that young engineers would uphold the same high standard that the local engineers adhered to.

"The necessary characteristics of the 21st

century engineers are very different from those of the 20th century ... mastery of the English language is important for them to compete internationally," he said.

He said they must be flexible in order to adapt to an ever-changing scenario in terms of job placement and challenges.

"Other skills such as information and communication technology (ICT) competencies, engineering management and environmental awareness are also important for modern engineers," he added.

The conference was a joint effort of the Faculty of Engineering, Unimas, the Institution of Engineers Malaysia (IEM), Sarawak Branch and the Sarawak Tourism Board (STB).

Also present were Unimas Vice Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Yusof Hadi, organising chairman Dr Awangku Abdul Rahman Pengiran Yusof and Institution of Engineers Malaysia Sarawak Branch chairman Datuk Hubert Thian.