

Unimas records two major achievements in education

By Noraini Shariff

KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. — When Universiti Malaysia Sarawak holds its third convocation this weekend, it will record two major achievements in the history of higher education in the country.

The first is that this year will see the graduation of the first-ever local masters student in health and community medicine.

The student, Siti Aminah Ahmad from Teluk Intan in Perak, completed her thesis on the Japanese encephalitis disease.

The second achievement is the graduation of the first-ever batch of seven cognitive science students in the country.

Cognitive science is multidisciplinary, encompassing many areas of study, including psychology, neuroscience, philosophy, linguistics and information technology.

The study of cognitive science — the business of

the mind — is a niche area for the university.

Unimas had the first cognitive science faculty in the region when it introduced its programme in 1996.

The programme focuses on the many issues related to how the human mind processes and interprets information, and its applicability to the development of intelligent systems.

As cognitive science is very information technology-oriented, IT has also been incorporated into the programme.

"We have now become the model for other universities which wish to set up their faculties," deputy vice-chancellor for research and services Professor Ghazally Ismail said.

The second cognitive science faculty in the country has now been established in Universiti Perguruan Sultan Idris in Perak.

This year's convocation ceremony will also see the first batch of 42 economics graduates of the university.

A total of 547 students will be graduating from Unimas this year.

These are from the faculties of economy and business, engineering, cognitive sciences and human development, social science, resource science and technology, applied and creative arts, information technology, and the centre for language and communication studies.

Unimas was established on Dec 24, 1992, and began operations on Aug 8, the following year.

One of the youngest universities in the country, Unimas has chalked up several successes, including carrying out the biggest environmental impact assessment in Asia for the proposed Bakun hydroelectric project.

The study involved the collaboration of more than 120 professionals and sub-professionals from 12 local and overseas firms and institutions.

The project was awarded

to Unimas through its Centre for Technology Transfer and Consultancy (CTTC). Since its inception in 1993, the CTTC has facilitated the accession and completion of 80 consultancy, contract research, contract education and seminar/conference management projects. These include EIA studies for the proposed Miri Resort City project and the proposed Sabah gas pipeline project.

It has also conducted numerous research projects for the Sarawak State Government, including the Sungai Sarawak environmental control and river management study, the baseline water quality study of Sungai Bakong in Miri, and profiling the current workforce in the hospitality industry there.

The CTTC also manages the Unimas research park which acts as the premises for exploratory and incubatory research by industries utilising the technology resources at the university.