

Unimas seeks research fund

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University hopes to secure RM58 million in 'techno fund' grants to support major research projects

KOTA SAMARAHAN: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) hopes to secure RM58 million in 'techno fund' grants from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation this year.

The university in a press statement yesterday said the fund would be used to support major research projects at the university in collaboration with local industries and companies.

Among the projects are a study on the potential of biomass as an alternative source of energy and a study on the viability of sago starch as a cost-effective source of bioethanol.

"It is believed these will have significant impact on the capability and capacity of researchers at Unimas.

"This year, the university hopes to secure more research grants from the Higher Education Ministry to support fundamental research and (also) a science fund from the science ministry to develop research to pre-commercialisation phase," said the statement.

Unimas secured several international grants in 2006.

Among them was the RM850,000-CATER research grant from the EU Sixth Programme Framework.

An EC Asialink grant was received by a research group on tropical peat land research in Sarawak while another team secured a RM997,000 research grant from the science ministry to study cancer among locals.

In a related development, Unimas is holding its first Research and Development (R&D) Exhibition from Jan 24 to 26 at its new campus here.

The exhibition hopes to showcase some of the research works carried out in 2005 and 2006 by members of the university's academic staff.

Apart from exhibiting R&D products, the exhibition also serves as a platform for the university to select some exhibits with potentials to be showcased at various international and national R&D exhibitions and expositions this year.

To be exhibited will be 45 products and innovations from all the eight faculties and research institutes.

These products range from engineering to technology innovations to medical implants, which may be useful to the industry and society.

In conjunction with the exhibition, there will also be a seminar cum workshop organised by the Research and Innovation Management Centre

(RIMC) of Unimas.

The seminar will present various aspects of R&D, including sources of research funding and training of young researchers.

RIMC director Dr Awangku Abdul Rahman Pgn Yusof said in a press statement yesterday that Unimas had been responsible for some significant achievements and successes in R&D.

In April 2006, the university participated in the 34th International Exhibition of Inventions, New Techniques and Products of Geneva in Switzerland, where it won four gold, three silver and one bronze medals.

It also won three special international country awards in Geneva, which was a record set by a local public university.

In November of the same year, the 'eBario' project of the Faculty of Computer Science and Information Technology won the prestigious gold medal at the Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management (CAPAM) Biennial Conference in Australia.

And in December, the university won the first prize in the handicraft category of the Piala Seri Endon 2006 competition in Kuala Lumpur.

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