

Five potential R&D focus points

Unimas tapping into state's niche areas to improve competitiveness

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KOTA SAMARAHAN: Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) is tapping into the state's rich potential for niche research areas in order to improve its standing and competitiveness.

Outgoing vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Khairuddin Ab Hamid said the university had identified five niche areas to focus on in its research and innovation.

These are biodiversity and environmental conservation, new and

emerging infectious tropical diseases, rural informatics, renewable energy and green technology, and design and innovation, whereby modern technology can be incorporated into indigenous arts and creativity.

"For Unimas to be better known in the future, we have to strive for new and innovative ideas in which we have the advantage.

"So I'm looking at Sarawak and Borneo as a source of a lot of potential in research and innovation," he told reporters after handing over duty to his successor Prof Dr Morshidi

Sirat at the Unimas campus here yesterday.

In addition, Khairuddin said Unimas could lead the way in the new field of Borneo studies through collaboration with other institutions in the region.

"What I would like to see in the future is Unimas leading a consortium of universities. If we can form a consortium of all the universities in Borneo and we are the leader, that would be a good achievement.

"There are so many universities which we have not really explored

much contact with, in Kalimantan, Sabah, Brunei and also in Sarawak," he said.

On the handing over of the vice-chancellorship, Khairuddin said there would always be new programmes and activities for his successor to carry out.

"For example, in terms of infrastructure, though we almost complete physically, we are still growing. We still need to expand our capacity and space for teaching and learning as well as research activities," he said.

He also called for continuous

improvement, saying that the sky was the limit in the academic world.

"The university environment has changed. We have to be at the forefront in the creation of new knowledge, innovation and giving back to society.

"Therefore we have to challenge ourselves from time to time and set new targets for ourselves in order to be competitive."

Khairuddin was appointed the fourth vice-chancellor of Unimas in 2008 and will remain at the university after the handover.