

Peat research lab appeals for federal research and development budget

KUCHING: The Kuching-based Tropical Peat Research Laboratory (TPRL) is appealing to the federal government for a research and development (R&D) budget for Sarawak of RM25 million for the next five years to put its infrastructure, including human capacity development in

place, its director Dr Lulie Melling said yesterday.

She said the availability of such funds would create opportunities for Sarawakians to be trained in the field of oil palm agronomy, particularly as local universities currently did not produce any soil science graduates, at its

laboratory unit - the first entity in the world to embark on tropical peat research.

"It takes up to three to five years to build up that human capacity so it is a matter of urgency that our new complex being built at a cost of RM40 million for the first phase at Kota Samarahan is ready

by next year," she told a media briefing attended by Sarawak Land Development Minister Tan Sri Dr James Masing here.

"We are looking at the ones with science academic background from rural areas, who can survive the harsh environment (roughing it out in the deep swamp peats)," she

said, adding that the 31-ha complex located next to Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) campus would initially house a three-storey researchers' accommodation, including foreign researchers, sports and recreational facilities and multipurpose hall. — Bernama