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Prof. Datuk Dr Zawawi (right) exchanging letters of UNIMAS appointment to carry out the Bakun EIA report, while Dato Seri Anwar Ibrahim (2nd from right) looks on.

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UNIMAS assigned to carry out EIA report

by ADEN NAGRACE

KUCHING, Fri.- Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) was today officially appointed by Ekran to carry out the Environmental Impact Study (EIA) for the RM15 billion Bakun hydropower development project.

A brief ceremony to mark the official appointment was today held at the Chief Minister's Office at Wisma Bapa Malaysia here, witnessed by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Dato Seri Dr Anwar Ibrahim.

Unimas was represented by its Vice Chancellor Professor Dato Dr Zawawi Ismail while Ekran was represented by its executive chairman Datuk Ting Pek Khing.

Also present at the exchange of letters between both parties were the Chief Min-

ister Datuk Patinggi Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud and Unimas Council chairman Tan Sri Datuk Amar Haji Bujang Mohd Noor.

Bakun hydropower development project, the biggest of its kind in Malaysia, was recently privatised to Ekran Berhad.

The EIA study will be carried out by Unimas through its Centre for Technology Transfer and Consultancy (CTTC), a centre established by the university to facilitate liaisons with external agencies for their mutual benefit and to enable them, particularly industries, to seek consultancy services.

The body which was registered under Department of Environment (DOE) for EIA work was headed by its director Prof Murtedza Mohamed, who has vast experience in conducting EIA studies.

The involvement of CTTC is an assurance that there would be some deliberate efforts in terms of transfer of knowledge and technology from the foreign experts engaged for the study.

The task of Unimas will include sourcing of experts needed for the detailed EIA undertaking, monitoring the progress of the study, and finally compiling and presenting the EIA report to both the State and Federal authorities for their approval.

Unimas's role in the EIA study will also provide opportunities for various post-EIA activities to be carried out in the State.

Since the university is based in Sarawak, it will have easier access to the project site to monitor both the development as well as operational stages of the Bakun project.

To facilitate the study, Unimas will also set up a permanent research centre within the Batang Rajang Basin, which is ex-

pected to attract many local and foreign researchers who will come forward to contribute towards further enriching the environmental database in respect of the Batang Rajang Basin.

The EIA study components and areas of coverage are extensive. The final report will address issues such as socio-economic (including resettlement), socio-cultural, hydrology, water quality, public health and safety, land use, vegetation, wildlife aquatic resources, erosion and sedimentation, microclimate, and other general environmental considerations.

The exercise which will involve a total of 60 locals and 14 foreign experts, will also mobilise about 160 personnel from Unimas, local and foreign universities, local and foreign consultancy firms and several federal and state government agencies.

