

# Unimas research focuses on 5 niche areas

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**KOTASAMARAHAN:** Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) is currently embarking on five niche areas of research by taking advantage of the state's locality, resources and ambitions.

The five niche areas are Biodiversity and Environmental Management, Emerging Tropical Infectious Diseases, Renewable Energy and Green Technology, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Development and ICT for Development and Industrial Design.

According to Unimas vice-chancellor Professor Dato Dr Kadim Suaidi, the university will be allocating a major part of their financial and human resources to build strength in these five niche areas.

Speaking to reporters after officiating at the Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM) Roadshow on campus yesterday, Kadim said their centre for Emerging Tropical Infectious

Diseases is currently leading research on the common diseases in Borneo.

"Due to our location in Sarawak, Unimas is able to study on tropical diseases in the environment where they naturally occur. By using both classical and molecular biology tools, our researchers hope to understand the epidemiology and host-pathogen interactions to better predict occurrence of future outbreaks," said Kadim.

He also said that the centre is headed by Prof Dr Balbir Singh who is a holder of the prestigious Merdeka Award and listed as one of the Top Research Scientist Malaysia (TRSM) by ASM.

Besides the centre for Emerging Tropical Infectious Diseases, he also said that Biodiversity and Environmental Management are also taking advantage of the state's locality by capitalising on the available resources.

"We are also collaborating with the local communities, government and non-government agencies as well as national and



SCIENCE OF THE TIMES: Kadim (second left) with Unimas deputy vice chancellor Peter Songan (second right), Unimas Research and Innovation Management Centre director Mustafa Abdul Rahman (left) after the launch of the ASM roadshow yesterday.

international researchers to study the conservation of tropical biodiversity and the environment," he said.

In line with the Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy (Score), having a niche in Green Technology said Kadim, is

instrumental to support the state government in strengthening and rationalising efforts towards all renewable energy

technologies.

He also said that through the U-Score initiative, Unimas together with other institutes of higher learning are tasked to provide the manpower to cater to the industries in Score.

"At the same time, researchers are also focused on alternative energy as well as on the reduction of energy consumption to tackle emergent issues associated with global warming and diminishing fossil fuels," he added.

For the ICT Development and ICT for Development, Kadim said research is to benefit Malaysians in attaining a better life and achieving socio economic growth through technology.

He also said that research will include development of new approaches in working with indigenous groups in Malaysia.

The last niche, said Kadim, will be on Industrial Design which encompasses a wide range of user and technology driven products to enhance the sustainable economic development of the country.