

Expo promoting research and development now on at Unimas

KUCHING: The 'Second Annual Unimas R&D Expo 2008' is now taking place at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas) West Campus's Cais Auditorium.

It is in line with the government's call to commercialise research and development products from public universities.

Academic and International Deputy Vice Chancellor Professor Dr Mohd Azib Salleh yesterday opened the expo which will end today.

Themed 'R&D towards Wealth Creation', it is divided into three different categories namely new products and innovation for 2008, a showcase of research excellence achievements, and products which have won awards in 2007.

The exhibits include creative designs utilising recycled wastes, environmental engineering, robotics technology, medical tools, Information Communication Technology (ICT) and augmented reality systems.

"The main objectives of the expo are to promote research and development products among Unimas staff and students, and the public at large; and to identify and select potential products to represent Unimas at both national and international expositions of

2008," said Azib.

It was also hoped that the expo would generate interest among Unimas students to pursue postgraduate studies.

Retrospectively, products selected from last year's inaugural Unimas R&D Expo had earned the university prestigious awards both nationally and internationally.

Citing an example, he said the university won the 'Best of the Best Award' at the Malaysia Technology Exhibition (MTE2007) held in Kuala Lumpur last year, for a product called the 'Emergency Aids Vest'.

Unimas was listed among the top five Malaysian public universities at the exhibition after winning four gold, three silver and one bronze awards.

The university also secured some awards at the prestigious public universities exhibition and conference (PECIPTA 2007) held in August last year.

Since the Ninth Malaysian Plan was launched in 2006, there had been two main sources of government grants namely the Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation (MOSTI), and the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE).

Azib said a major milestone in the

university research history was the RM11.6 million research grant from MOSTI to support a collaborative pre-commercialisation project between a researcher from Unimas with an international firm and a local private company in Kuching.

The research was on a high-speed fermentation system in the production of ethanol for bio-fuel from Sago.

In addition, Unimas secured 27 projects MOSTI Science Fund grant, with a total amount of RM4.2 million.

A further RM2.6 million was secured from MoHE under the fundamental research grant scheme (FRGS) for 43 different projects and the researches are due for completion this year and 2010.

Apart from those grants, Azib said the university also secured numerous international research grants, which included the Wellcome Trust UK, European Commission, the Danish government, and the Canadian Research Council.

In order to enhance its research niche areas, the university had established four Centres of Research Excellence (CoEx) namely Malaria Research Centre, Water Research Centre, Rural Informatics Centre of Excellence, and Image Analysis and



R&D TOWARDS WEALTH CREATION: Azib listens to an exhibitor at the expo.

Spatial Technologies Centre of Excellence.

In a major effort to establish a strong research culture in Unimas, he said that the deputy vice chancellor's (Research and

Innovation) office, together with the Research and Innovation Management Centre (RIMC), had outlined strategic action plans for the next three years.

These include workshops and

seminars on research grant's proposal preparation and application, and intellectual property as well as 'technopreneurship' programmes for its faculty members.

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