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Law-Research

LAW ASKS R & D INSTITUTIONS TO REVOLUTIONISE THEIR APPROACH

KUALA LUMPUR, May 27 (Bernama) -- All institutions involved in research and development (R & D) activities have been asked to look into ways to revolutionise their approach in carrying out their task.

Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding said they should jump out from the conventional way of doing R & D in terms of managing funding and also carrying out the task.

"The universities and other institutes involved in R & D have been asked to come out with suggestions. We put the challenge to them," Law told reporters after a dialogue session with chief executive offices and coordinators of R & D programmes from local universities and research institutes.

Law said the move was initiated after Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed his disappointment last month that government allocation for R & D were not fully used up by research institutions.

Under the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the government has allocated RM470 million for the Intensification of Research in Priority Areas (IRPA) Fund.

Law said the ministry had also commissioned a study to review the National Science and Technology Policy including identifying new mechanisms for research funding and the output would serve as vital inputs in the preparation of the Eight Malaysia Plan.

To show the government's seriousness in promoting R & D activities, Law said the percentage for the Multimedia Grant Scheme (MSG) had been increased from 50 per cent to 70 per cent in line with other grants such as the Industries Grant Scheme.

Under the MGS which has been allocated RM100 million, all local companies accorded Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) status can apply for grants to undertake research in science and technology.

Law also said that they were encouraging the industries, as the end-user, to give feedback on what areas that they need the R & D to be done.

During the dialogue, Law said the participants brought out the issue of fair and equal distribution of funding which some claimed favours certain sectors or institutions only.

"There is a lot of areas and we cannot cover all. Agro-industry is still the biggest receiver and this is due to better facilities and capability," he said.

The minister also said that in order to avoid overlapping in research projects, only one among the 33 institutions involved would be identified to carry out certain projects and human resources would be pooled together at that institute.

Besides that, linkages between institutes involved in the R & D, the ministry and the industries would be improved, he said.

"There are also suggestions to create a website so that all the institutions can channel their views and problems through the Internet. They also want better protection and support for their innovation from government agencies," he said.

He said under the Seventh Malaysia Plan, the ministry received almost 4,000 applications for funding and had approved 57 per cent of them, which was higher than the 30 per cent approval rate in developed country.

Agro-industry was the biggest receiver under the IRPA (1996-1998) with RM141.6 million, followed by health and engineering science while

Universiti Putra Malaysia (RM91.9 million) was given the biggest allocation among the 33 institutes.

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