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Ministry wants to revolutionise R&D system

KUALA LUMPUR, Thurs. – The Science, Technology and Environment Ministry wants to revolutionise the current system of managing and promoting research and development to ensure its programmes are more effective.

  Science, Technology and Environment Minister Datuk Law Hieng Ding today said it was time to move away from the traditional approach so that a more dynamic system could be implemented to boost research.

  "Today, I urge local research institutes, institutes of higher learning as well as the private sector to come up with ideas on the matter," he said after a dialogue with chief executive officers of research institutions and officials from local universities.

  The dialogue, the first between the Minister and research insitutions and universities, was to discuss and obtain the views of participants on ways to improve the country's research programmes.

  On May 15, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad expressed his unhappiness over the lack of progress in research and development.

  He said government agencies and the private sector were reluctant to spend on research because they did not know of its potential benefits.

  Law added among the areas being looked into for improvement were the funding mechanism under the Intensification of Research in Priority Areas.

  The Ministry wants to ensure IRPA funds are effectively used so that there will be an increase in research productivity.

  Among others, it wants to ensure there is equal distribution of funding for all sectors.

  Several issues were raised at the dialogue. Among others, participants emphasised the need for more flexibility in approving funding especially to newcomers, and the need to expedite grant approval.

  Other issues were the need to strengthen linkages with industry to enhance research productivity, to emphasise R&D in the engineering sciences, to develop knowledge management systems and to address legal issues pertaining to the commercialisation of research findings.

  "Through this dialogue, we want to know how effective our R&D programmes have been in promoting science and technology," Law said.

  He also announced that the Government had decided to increase funding under the Multimedia R&D Grant Scheme to up to 70 per cent. Prior to this, R&D for multimedia projects are given only up to 50 per cent funding.

  "This is in line with other existing schemes which also give up to 70 per cent funding. The schemes are the Industry R&D Grant Scheme and the Demonstrator Applications Grant Scheme," he said.
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