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USM sets up RM15m fund to promote research activities

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A RM15 million endowment fund has been established by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) to enable the Penang-based institution to solicit donations

and contributions to finance research activities.

The fund will also be used to acknowledge and reward researchers for their contributions and accomplishments, USM vice-chancellor Professor Datuk Dzul kifli Abdul Razak said.

"We aim to promote a more attractive environment for research and the staff will be motivated to engage in specific research activities which can enhance the image of the institution globally," Dzul kifli told Business Times in Penang.

Stressing the importance of research in the university's future development, he said researchers will tap the endowment fund first before

turning to central agencies or the Education Ministry for grants.

"Those working on high-level research in areas like medical biotechnology, the mechanism of diseases and bio-materials engineering will be accorded priority when tapping the fund," he added.

Pointing to larger research programmes which require sustainable funding sources, Dzul kifli said this is to ensure the recruitment and retention of expertise and support staff, the purchase of expensive equipment and larger operating space.

"For this, it is pertinent for the university to establish a reserve to ensure a sustainable flow of funds that will contribute to the success of world-class activities," he added.

USM's research and development blueprint this year is set to see the university establishing contact with the Koreans to work in biotechnology,

while links will also be made with Cuba on the production of vaccine.

Last year, the 34-year-old USM operated on a cumulative research and development budget of RM100 million.

With plans to increase the figure by 30 per cent this year, Dzul kifli said efforts are put in place by USM to secure as many research grants as

possible from prestigious international funding sources.

He also said USM plans to take up the challenge made by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad to the scientific community to produce a Malaysian Nobel Laureate by 2020.

The challenge, he added, is being considered under the university's world-class research activity where programmes suggested for inclusion have been evaluated against similar global criteria - where peers assess the importance of an individual's contribution towards the advancement of

knowledge in related fields.

