

16/09/2003

## Giving academic research public due and attention

THE traditional mould associated with universities is that they are institutions reveling in pure academic pursuit with scant regard nor relevance to practical concerns and realities. As a result, tonnes of tomes and reams of research are spewed from the hallowed halls of academia with high-flown theories which have no practical nor commercial relevance. This of course is a sweeping generalisation which does little justice to the army of researchers and academics who do indeed combine intellectual endeavour with an eye to real-world applications. There are indeed many research boffins beavering away in the laboratories of our universities doing ground-breaking and pioneering works, to earn their academic stripes on the one hand while keeping an eagle eye for commercial possibilities.

Key to the carrying out of this research work is funding which comes exclusively from the government. In each of the previous national development plans, the government has allocated large sums of money to public universities (referred to in the Bahasa Malaysia initials IPTA) to undertake research in various disciplines. This is to enhance the country's development and competitiveness to achieve developed nation status by 2020. The research effort has contributed significantly towards knowledge, innovation and the creation of new products and technology. Working quietly behind the scenes away from the glare of the limelight, many products and processes have been rolled out from these laboratories. In the process, many of the research outputs have found commercial applications and won international awards.

To bring research, researchers and end-users together, a conference (IPTA 2003) will be held on Oct 9-12 at the Putra World Trade Centre. An exhibition showcasing the achievements as well as products will be held concurrently in this the second of this once-in-two-year event.

UPM has been mandated by the government to organise IPTA 2003 putting its Vice Chancellor Datuk Dr Muhamad Zohadie Bardaie in the forefront of the event. His role is quite appropriate with UPM standing heads and shoulders above several local universities in the forefront of research and development efforts, especially in the field of agriculture and biotechnology.

Zohadie echoes the call of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad who has called for all public universities to share research outputs which will contribute significantly to the growth and development of the nation.

The exhibition is specially planned as a platform to congregate researchers from the following seven research clusters;

- \* Agriculture, Food and Forestry
- \* Energy, Products and Environment
- \* Technology and Communication
- \* Science and Engineering
- \* Health and Allied Sciences
- \* Humanities and Social Sciences

The conference and forum will provide opportunities for researchers from the private and public sectors and institutions of higher learning to deliberate and share their research findings. Papers presented will include those in the areas of achievement and management of research, and collaborative efforts to improve research quality. A forum on 'Investing in Innovation' is scheduled and will be hosted by a panel of experts in the area of research and development. Zohadie says the exhibition will also provide the opportunity for signing of Memorandum of Understanding between the public universities and private organisations towards commercialising research output.

Apart from promoting research output and capacity of the universities,

the event is designed to enhance public and private sector confidence in research facilities and expertise available, to promote student interest in research and development activities and more importantly, to market competitive research expertise locally and internationally.

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