

Beneficial collaboration

SMEs are encouraged to partner with universities to solve product or service issues

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KUANTAN: Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) are encouraged to collaborate with public higher learning institutions to solve problems that arise in their products and services.

Higher Education Ministry deputy secretary-general (development) Datuk Nik Ali Mat Yunus said the unstable economic situation had affected SMEs and with limited resources and technological know-how, it was getting difficult for them to offer new quality, competitive and cost-effective products and services.

"SME operators should be more proactive in changing the current trend from low value activities that are resource intensive to technology intensive.

The ministry has introduced the Public-Private Research Network (PPRN) initiative to develop the innovation ecosystem that is critical in our country's economic growth by increasing the role of public higher learning institutions as problem solvers," he said during the launch of the PPRN 2017 tour at **Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP)** here recently.

Nik Ali said collaboration projects would be based on request under the PPRN so both parties could seek a solution together.

"PPRN provides a platform for companies and enterprises facing technical and technological problems to connect with researchers and potential experts from local higher learning institutions and foreign research centres.

"Through this initiative, innovation activities in local higher learning institutions can also be focused in line with the industries' and market's needs. It is in line with the Higher Education Minister's announcement that 2017 is the year of translational research.

"The research works of these institutions are translated into



PPRN provides a platform for companies and enterprises facing technical problems to connect with researchers from higher learning institutions. —filepic

solutions to national and international issues for the benefit of industries, academia, the government and most importantly, the community," he said.

Up until April 1, the PPRN matched 634 innovation projects, which involved the cooperation between 451 companies and 466 research groups in higher learning institutions nationwide, said Nik Ali.

"However, only 10 companies from Pahang are involved in this initiative for now. Thus, I urge local businessmen, especially from Pahang, to make use of this platform to forward their technical

and technological problems so it can be solved together," he said.

UMP vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Daing Nasir Ibrahim said each university had its niche area and since UMP was primarily an engineering institution, there were not many SMEs that were involved in this field that had taken part.

"Even then, the few projects we have undertaken are able to deliver high impact results," he said.

Among the projects exhibited at the event were a *mengkuang* leaf cutter machine, a portable motorised honey extractor and a bird deterrent device.

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