

# Sabah to become base for nano-fibre technology

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By Murib Morpi

**KOTA KINABALU:** Tokyo Econet Limited Company (TELCO) wants to make Sabah a base for advancing and introducing new technologies and applications in nano-fibre to the rest of the country and beyond.

Its president, Kondo Horoaki, said he had always liked Malaysia, in particular Sabah, for its very welcoming attitude and friendliness towards Japan.

"Over the years I have noticed that Malaysians, especially Sabahans, like and were very kind to the Japanese, unlike people in some other countries who only liked to criticize and talk bad about us.

"Even my family members and relatives like to spend their holidays in Malaysia. So, when I heard the news that the government here is having a headache due to water pollution issues, I decided to come to Sabah," he told reporters here yesterday when asked why Econet chose the state.

TELCO is credited for developing

cutting edge technology for mass producing a special nano-fibre that can be used as the cheapest, most effective and efficient tool for cleaning oceanic oil spill.

The company yesterday inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with University Malaysia Sabah (UMS), as a follow-up to the letter of intent they signed in May last year to pursue collaborative efforts in the enhancement of technological innovation and human capital in the area of nano-fibre.

Horoaki said he has big hopes that existing technologies in UMS can be further advanced with Econet's knowledge and expertise in nano-fibre to create new and improved materials that could help in addressing environmental issues, not just in Malaysia but in other countries as well.

He added there were limitless potentials in nano-fibre and new applications developed through joint research with UMS could contribute

towards the development of various industries in the country.

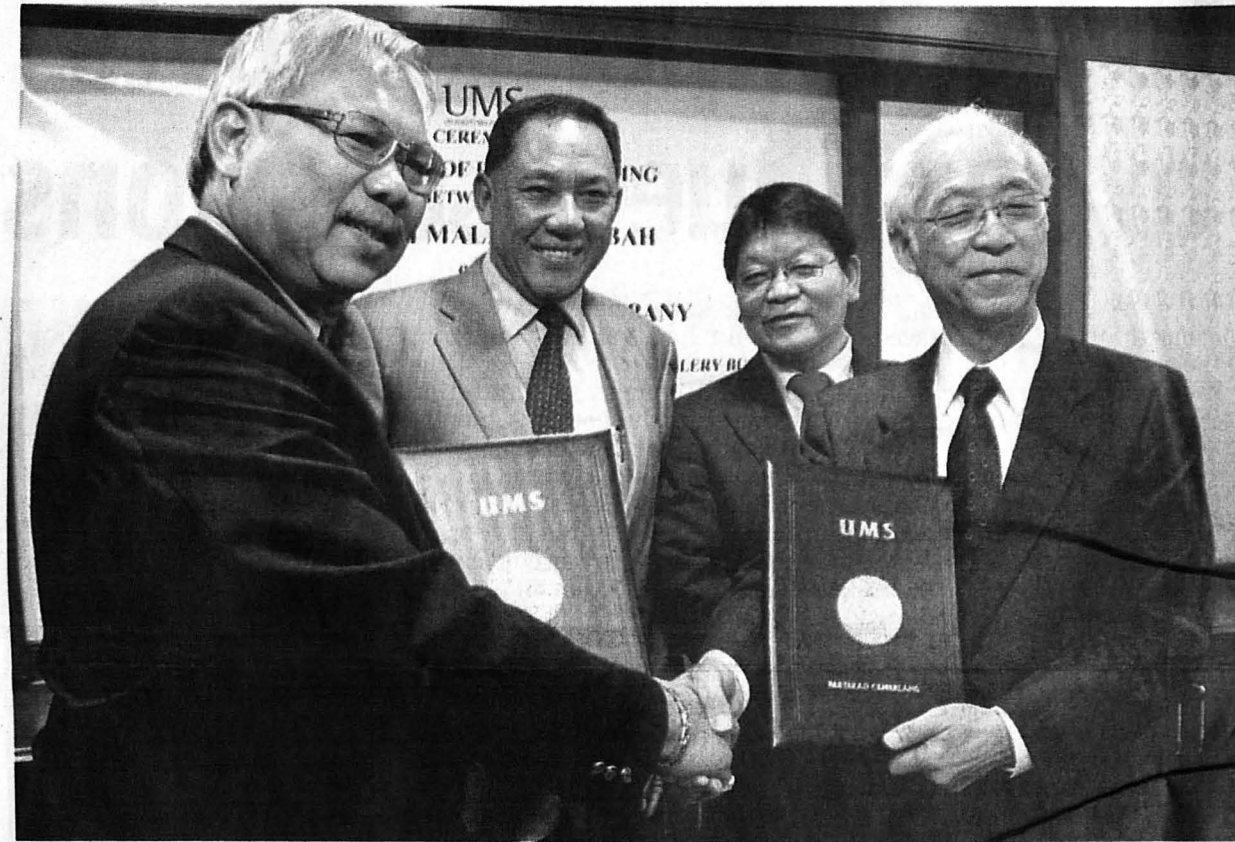
"Our company was set up about seven years ago with a focus on dealing with environmental issues. About six years ago, we embarked on nano-technology and collaborated with Tokyo University to develop machines to mass produce nano-fibres.

"We have succeeded in creating machines that can produce more nano-fibres cheaper and faster and we have delivered some of our products to customers in several countries.

"Our hope is to further improve the mass producing technology so that it can be used by the rest of the world and that's what we are doing here with UMS," he said.

"Even before the signing of the MoU, TELCO has been working closely with the School of Engineering of the university to further improve the nano-fibre mass producing technology," he added.

UMS vice chancellor Prof Datuk



Dr Kamaruzaman Ampon (left) exchanging the MoU documents with Horoaki while UMS Registrar Datuk Abdullah Mohd Said (second left) and representative of NGO Future, Yoshida Noriaki, look on after the signing ceremony yesterday.

Seri Dr Kamaruzaman Ampon speaking at the ceremony said UMS was fully aware of TELCO's leadership role in nano-technology and the MoU endorsed the mutual commitment of both sides to enhance technological advancement in the field.

He said applying nano-fibre technology to create nano-fibrous membranes would result in a highly viable solution for sea-water desalination, potentially very useful for Sabah where sources of drinking

water is scarce.

According to Dr Kamaruzaman, the nano-fibre materials developed by Econet had served extremely well as a water-oil separator, and potentially could be used as a powerful solvent for oil-spill cleaning.

"Sabah off-shore oil and gas reserves are extensive, and extraction efforts will be significant in the near future. Nano-fibre technology has the capacity to play an integral and highly

significant role in decontamination effort should an oil spill occur or hazardous chemicals were released into the surrounding waters of the off-shore facilities.

"Through this collaboration, our professors, research engineers and post graduate students, will be working closely with Telco to develop technologies for the desalination of seawater and waste water by nano-fibre membranes and nano-fibres for oil spill clean-up in seawater," he said.