

UMS leads major international research on zoonotic malaria with record-breaking grant

TBP 26.11.2025 P.02

KOTA KINABALU: Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) on Tuesday launched a major international research project titled "Sustainable Control of Zoonotic Malaria Through an Integrated Approach" under the SATREPS (Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development) programme, valued at RM14.26 million, the largest research grant ever received in the university's history.

The five-year project is a collaboration involving the Ministry of Higher Education (MoHE), the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and the Japan Agency for Medical Research and Development (AMED). It focuses on developing sustainable solutions to combat zoonotic malaria, particularly *Plasmodium knowlesi*, which remains a key public health challenge in Sabah and a crucial barrier to Malaysia obtaining WHO malaria elimination certification.

The SATREPS project is jointly



Kasim (middle) presenting appointment letters to sub-project leaders.

led by Prof Dr Kamruddin Ahmed (Malaysia) and Prof Dr Osamu Kaneko (Japan). All five sub-projects under SATREPS are headed by academic staff and researchers from UMS'

Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FPSK) namely Prof Dr Mohammad Saffree Jeffree, Assoc Prof Dr Syed Sharizman Syed Abdul Rahim, Dr Azman Atil @ Azmi and Assoc Prof Dr

Fong Siat Yee @ Alison.

This, UMS said, clearly reflects FPSK's strong research capacity and leadership in the fields of tropical medicine and public health.

The project will encompass development of rapid diagnostic kits for malaria detection; genetic and virulence analysis of zoonotic malaria parasites; transmission mapping involving humans, mosquitoes and macaques; discovery of anti-malaria compounds from Sabah's native plants and community education initiatives to strengthen prevention and public health resilience.

The outcomes of this research are expected to significantly contribute to Malaysia's malaria elimination efforts while enhancing preparedness for emerging infectious diseases in the region.

UMS Vice-Chancellor, Professor Datuk Dr Kasim Hj Mansor, described the launch as a major milestone for the university.

"This RM14.26 million SATREPS project is the biggest research grant UMS has ever received. It reflects international confidence in our researchers' expertise and our commitment to addressing real health

challenges affecting the people of Sabah.

"UMS is now at the forefront of tropical disease research, in line with our aspiration to be 'The Brain of Borneo,'" he said.

SATREPS is a Japanese Government programme jointly implemented by the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) and JICA. It promotes international collaborative research in areas such as environment, bioresources, infectious diseases, energy and disaster prevention, linking Japanese researchers with counterparts in partner countries to generate new knowledge and technologies for sustainable development.

UMS also expressed its appreciation to the Ministry of Health Malaysia, Sabah Health Department, Sabah Wildlife Department, and Bringing Back Our Rare Animals (BORA) for their support in enabling the successful implementation of this large-scale research initiative.