

Research works must emphasise on commercial viability — Masidi

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KOTA KINABALU: Institutes of higher learning have been urged to focus on their research and development (R&D) activities towards developing products with high commercial value.

Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Masidi Manjun said it was important for universities to emphasise on commercial potentials in conducting research to attract investments and the participation of the private sector.

Masidi, who is also the minister-in-charge of education in Sabah, said the state has many world-class researchers but only a handful of their work have been successfully transformed into profitable products.

"We have numerous researches in various fields but the percentage of researches that have been commercialised is very low. This is one aspect which universities must give attention to.

"It is not what we can produce but what we can sell. That is why there is a need to stress on creating something of a high commercial value and turn them into products that can be translated into profit quickly," he said when officiating Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) Research Appreciation Night 2010 here on Friday.

He added that the government has provided huge allocations for funding R&D activities at universities and the researchers themselves invested a considerable amount of money into their works.

It was only sensible if the outcome or findings of the researches could be developed into something commercially viable and profitable, he said.

"This will also encourage private

funding and investment. They would not hesitate to participate when they see the potential economic returns and this will allow more researches to be conducted and impact positively upon the growth of the R&D sector," he said.

He also said that institutes of higher learning should work towards collaboration with the private sector and strengthening them. They could do this by emphasizing on research that are in tandem with the need and economic interest of the industry.

Meanwhile, UMS vice chancellor Prof Datuk Seri Dr Kamaruzam Ampon said universities are still facing difficulties in translating their researches into something that can benefit the public economically.

According to him, many researches with promising economic potentials have not been applied or developed into commercial activities due to the lack of financial resources.

He quoted the UMS Borneo Marine Centre as an example. The centre has been very successful in its research where it has developed the technique for spawning high quality fish but the technology has not been applied on a commercial scale due to the lack of investors.

"We face constraints in producing the fish spawn on a bigger scale as it requires more resources to become a viable operation," he said.

Touching on enhancing collaboration with the private sector, he said UMS was planning to set up an innovation centre, which will promote and oversee networking activities between the university's researchers and industry players. The centre is expected to be ready within this year, he added.