

## COVER STORY

# Boosting a two-way link in research

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**E**NERGY, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Minister Yeo Bee Yin recently voiced her concerns on the lack of researchers working in the industry.

She said that research and development (R&D) in the country focuses on academic research but the outcome is not utilised in related industries.

As such, this has deterred the development of advanced technologies and products.

It was reported in the *New Straits Times* that some 78 per cent of the country's full-time researchers work at universities while only 12.3 per cent work in the industry.

Yeo added that the country has to work towards the direction where R&D will no longer be limited to academia but also through collaboration with the industry.

The ministry will be allocating at least 50 per cent of research and development funds to experimental research next year.

"The government wants to create an ecosystem that encourages industries to thrive and allows talents to grow."

Last year, 70.5 per cent of R&D expenditure was spent on applied research, with only 8.6 per cent allocated to experimental research.

"If we have an ecosystem supportive of new technologies, which allow industries to develop quickly in this fast-changing world, we will be able to overcome the challenges we face in this disruptive world."

## ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia deputy vice-chancellor (UKM) (research affairs and innovation) Professor Dr Mohd Ekhwan Toriman said researchers excel at university because passion for research inspires students.

Mohd Ekhwan said universities allow researchers to be independent and explore transdisciplinary research compared to those working at companies where the work scope is limited.

"Working at the university exposes researchers to the latest research and technology revealed at international conferences and facilitates networking with researchers from other tertiary institutions.

"There is no requirement for researchers at companies to attend international conferences, thus limiting their opportunity for networking," he added.

Furthermore, he said researchers at the university share their findings and latest discoveries with students.

"Most universities provide researchers with facilities to carry out their work. They benefit from grants and incentives to conduct their research independently."

University of Malaya (UM) deputy vice-chancellor (research and innovation) Professor Dr Noorsaadah Abd Rahman said researchers at the university do research to generate new knowledge that will push, not



**6** The industry, particularly SMEs, and the university need to learn to trust each other and be more open. Then we can better work together and allow easy access and sharing of talents as well as facilities.

**NOORSAADAH ABD RAHMAN**  
UM deputy vice-chancellor (research and innovation)



Mohd Ekhwan Toriman



Researchers at both the university and industry are equally important. PICTURE COURTESY OF

only the boundary of knowledge but also create new technology.

She said those working in the industry usually focus on experimental development research such as optimisation and scaling up research.

The industry should commercialise the output from university research.

"Researchers at both the university and industry are equally important. Good collaboration between the two boosts the flow of in-

formation between them."

## ISSUES

UKM's Institute of Systems Biology senior research fellow Dr Mohd Firdaus Raih said academic research has multiple aims which are usually long-term. Research into fundamental areas of science and translating findings into useful technology take time.

He added that such types of research are not sustainable in the private sector due to