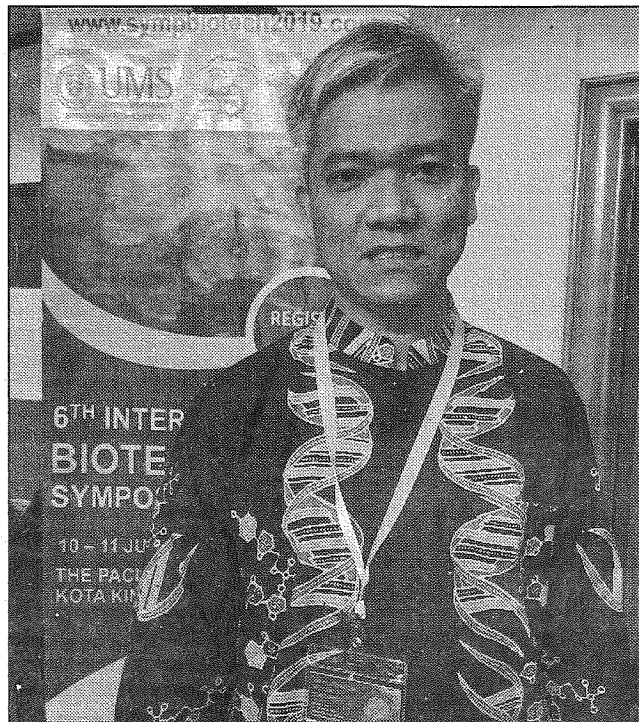


UMS searches for tuberculosis cure with university from Indonesia

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By DK RYNI QAREENA



Assoc Prof Dr Kholis Abdurachim Audah.

KOTA KINABALU: The Biotechnology Research Institute (BRI) of Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) is working with Swiss German University (SGU) Indonesia to find a cure for tuberculosis.

BRI director Dr Zarina Amin said the team, which has entered their sixth month of collaboration, was currently investigating and identifying several plant compounds to fight tuberculosis, including mangrove extract.

The collaborative research, conducted under the UMS Matching Grant, she explained, would take two years and is worth a total RM400,000 with each party contributing RM200,000.

Under the partnership, she stated that the team would look for various medicinal plants in both Sabah and Indonesia to be turned into anti-tuberculosis cure.

"We are hoping that the research would help reduce or eradicate tuberculosis in Sabah as it is known that the state has the highest rate of infection with 20 per cent.

"Our research project at the moment is to try to ensure that we can match identified compounds that could be effective against tuberculosis; it will take a while because the bacteria take time to develop," she said, adding that the research was the outcome of last year's International Biotechnology Symposium.

Dr Zarina was speaking to reporters after the opening ceremony of the 6th International Biotechnology Symposium here yesterday.

She added that among others, the research would also showcase the abundance of natural resources in Sabah and UMS' research strength and facilities.

"The symposium highlight-

ed our research and brought in stakeholders to collaborate with us in Sabah and this year, we emphasize more on significance to communities and industry where we need to ensure that our research can be translated into both.

"Therefore, our plan for the research on tuberculosis was to ensure that it could be brought to next year and proceeded as anti-tuberculosis and such, with the help of the Sabah government," she said.

Meanwhile, SGU Vice-Director for Research, Assoc Prof Dr Kholis Abdurachim Audah said the university had collaborated with UMS in studying infectious diseases with the team currently extracting mangrove to identify its potential to fight tuberculosis and dengue.

He noted that Borneo has abundant resources of mangrove species which was found to contain plenty of useful medicinal values.

"So far we are extracting as many as possible mangrove extracts and later on we will test or screen all those for tuberculosis and dengue viruses.

"Particularly at this stage, we are testing in the UMS facilities for tuberculosis and dengue originally from Sabah but in the later stage, we hope that we can also test in the similar approach, all extracts obtained from both Sabah and Indonesia against other tuberculosis and dengue viruses in Indonesia as well," he said.

Earlier, Deputy Minister of Energy, Science, Technology, Environment and Climate Change Isnaraissah Munirah Majilis officiated at the 6th International Biotechnology Symposium, representing minister Yeoh Bee Yin.

Also present were UMS Assistant Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Marcus Jopony, and symposium chairperson Assoc Prof Dr Kenneth Rodriguez.