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Mimos driving nanotechnology

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KUALA LUMPUR: Applied-research organisation Mimos Bhd wants to engage with more researchers in the field of nanotechnology, in the hopes that the technology will become the next economic driver.

Saat Shukri Embong, research director of Mimos' nanoelectronic/microelectronic and nanotechnology research, said the organisation wants to get more researchers in its nanotechnology centre of excellence at its headquarters in Technology Park Malaysia.

"Our facility offers a complete ecosystem for researchers and we run it with a vision of releasing completed nanotechnology solutions into the market," he said at a briefing to introduce the centre to the press.

Saat said having more experts in the field will enable the country to take advantage of the lucrative market for nanotechnology-enabled products.

Citing numbers from consulting firm Ceintifica, he said the market for products enabled by nanotechnology is expected to hit the US\$1.5 trillion (RM4.5 trillion) mark by 2015.

The highest growth rate is expected to come from nanotechnology for the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors.

By working closely with

researchers in this field, Mimos hopes to increase the number of local experts in order to be more competitive on a global footing.

"A lab in South Korea has about 5,000 researchers," Saat said. "There are 37 domain experts in our centre of excellence now; we want to double this over the next five years."

"We may not be able to employ all of the local researchers at Mimos but having them work with us is a good first step to making this dream happen," he said.

"We want to be well positioned to help the country achieve its goal, i.e. for nanotechnology to contribute at least a small percentage to the gross national income by 2020."

Mimos has also drawn up a five-year roadmap for nanotechnology development to boost research in the field.

"The team has researched the

use of nanotechnology in the agriculture sector, and has come up with technology that helps farmers check on the health of their crops, moisture levels and soil nutrients," Saat said.

At the end of that period, Mimos hopes to have more sophisticated products. One that Saat has in mind is a wearable sensor that keeps tabs on the person's vital signs.

"This way, you can keep tabs on your health and your doctor can have a full report when you visit him next," he explained.

Conceptualised in 2004, Mimos' nanotechnology centre of excellence is one of five such centres in the country and has produced a total of 190 patent disclosures.

The four other nanotechnology centres of excellence are in Universiti Malaysia Perlis, Universiti Teknologi Petronas, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia.

We want to be well positioned to help the country achieve its goal

— SAAT SHUKRI EMBONG, A RESEARCH DIRECTOR AT MIMOS



IN THE LAB: Saat hopes for more nanotechnology researchers in order for the country to be more globally competitive.