# UNIs URGED TO USE GRID

**By JO TIMBUONG**

**FASTER RESULTS:** International Medical University students conducting research in a laboratory. Universities are encouraged to use MyREN to conduct their research and development activities.

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Universities are encouraged to use the high performance computing facility, MyREN (Malaysian Research and Education Network) for their research and development activities.

Universities are not fully utilising the facility because they are under the impression that it may be too high-tech for them to understand, said Siti Fauziah Abu, a project manager with the Multimedia Development Corp (MDeC), which oversees the MyREN project.

"Only some universities are using MyREN for their R&D endeavours but to be fair, it is still quite new," she said at a briefing with journalists at a seminar on high performance computing organised by MDeC and the British High Commission on Tuesday.

She added that MDeC is going on roadshows to get more researchers to hook up to the facility.

Launched two years ago, MyREN is a high-speed research network linking 13 local universities and research facilities including University Malaysia Sarawak, University Malaya and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

This grid-computing network integrates high performance computing clusters, applications and databases together via high-speed networks.

This network of computers is claimed to be powerful enough to support the most demanding of research experiments such as simulating chemical reactions or car crashes.

## Under-utilised

Abdul Rahman Ahmad Dahlan, director of Mimos grid computing, which is the "backbone" of MyREN, said it could simplify and speed up research and development for universities.

"Often we hear members of the academia lamenting they need more funds for research in order to afford more computing power but it's already there, why not use it?" he said.

He added that the facility was built with funds allocated by the Government under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

Another obstacle hindering universities from using the network is their defensive attitudes towards their projects.

Tan Tze Meng, a manager at MDeC who also oversees the

> **»Often we hear members of the academia lamenting they need funds for research in order to afford more computing power but it's already there, why not use it?«**
>
> ABDUL RAHMAN AHMAD DAHLAN, DIRECTOR OF MIMOS GRID COMPUTING

MyREN initiative said universities are afraid to share their project ideas with others.

Tan said the natural rivalry between universities is a factor deterring them from using the facility.

"Since putting your data on a grid means exposing it for others to use, they think twice about the idea," Tan said.

But there is hope yet for MyREN. Tan said some of the researchers have become more generous and are more willing to share their expertise with their peers from other universities.

"In recent meetings between MDeC and the universities, we found that the researchers were a bit more open in discussing their projects," he said adding that increased trust will lead to more research collaborations between the universities.

Mimos is also trying to simplify the MyREN interface to be more user-friendly for researchers.

One area that the applied-research company will be looking at is adding the "single logon" feature to the grid for researchers to gain access to all the information they need to find on the grid.

"We don't want them to think it is too hard to use and delay their research, (and we want to) encourage them to make full use of the facility," Mimos' Abdul Rahman said.