

# Researchers meet to discuss grant

BY DESMOND MARKUS

**KOTA SAMARAHAN:** A group of researchers from Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas), Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM), Roehampton University and Durham University from United Kingdom (UK) were at Unimas yesterday to discuss on the latest development of the Newton-Ungku Omar funded research grant.

The Newton-Ungku Omar Fund valued at £375 million promotes economic development and welfare of poor people in partnering countries through science and innovations.

It aims to strengthen science and innovation capacity and unlock further funding to support poverty alleviation. It is delivered through 15 UK delivery partners in collaboration with 15 partner countries.

Activities are in three broad areas, which are to increase the capacity for science and innovation in partner countries, to collaborate on development topics, and to create collaborative solutions to development challenges and strengthening innovation systems.

Among the co-researchers from Unimas under the grant are Associate Professor Dr Cheah Whye Lian and Dr Julia Lee Ai Cheng with their research of ToyBox Malaysia-Focusing on the issues of overweight and obesity from children to adulthood.

Based on preliminary data collected by the researchers, childhood obesity has become a growing problem of Malaysia due to rapid economic development, lifestyle and changes in non-communicable diseases.

"Local studies indicated a prev-



**UNIMAS** Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dato' Dr Mohamad Kadim Suaidi (third left), Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), Professor Dr Kopli Bujang (left) Dr Edward Leigh Gibson (2nd left) and Prof. Dr Cecelia Essau (4th right) from Roehampton University, and Prof. Dr Poh Bee Koon (3rd right) from UKM and co-researchers from Unimas, Associate Professor Dr Cheah Whye Lian (2nd right) and Dr Julia Lee Ai Cheng (right) posing for a group photograph.

alence of six to nine per cent of overweight and obesity was found in both urban and rural children, with higher rate among boys. Such phenomenon is not uncommon as more and more children indulged in sedentary lifestyle due to many factors.

"In Sarawak, a study among primary school children in Kuching reported prevalence among the Iban and Bidayuh children. However, studies on younger age children among the major ethnic groups are comparatively few, although there were indications that such trend is also found in rural areas of Sarawak, particularly areas which are adjacent to towns," said Cheah during an interview after a meeting with

the media at Staff Lounge, Rumah University, Unimas, yesterday.

Besides the two researcher, two more Newton-Ungku Omar funded research have also been awarded to two groups of academics at Unimas. It is the first time in the history of Unimas that its researchers have received three grants from the prestigious fund at any one time.

The two groups of researchers are, "Creative and Participatory Transcultural Practice and Problem Solving through Game Design and Computational Thinking (Creative Culture)" led by Dr Jacey-Lynn Minoi from Unimas together with team members, Associate Professor Dr Fitri Suraya Mohamad and Terrin Lim, and their partner researchers is

Coventry University from UK.

"Identifying Trade-Offs of Changing Land Use for Aquatic Environment and Socio-Economic Health, and Facilitating Sustainable Solutions", and the partner researchers are Unimas, National Oceanography Centre, Centre for Ecology & Hydrology, Swinburne University of Technology and University of Southampton.

Among present during the meeting were Unimas Vice-Chancellor, Professor Dato' Dr Mohamad Kadim Suaidi, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research & Innovation), Professor Dr Kopli Bujang, Dr Edward Leigh Gibson and Prof Dr Cecelia Essau of Roehampton University and Prof. Dr Poh Bee Koon of UKM.