



Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor eating a piece of 'rendang tok' (floating in front of him) in the International Space Station.

Bigger budget needed for research

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Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor filling up a questionnaire to assess the quality, texture and taste of food consumed in space compared to Earth.

Ahmad Badawi, also attested that Malaysia's first astronaut Dr Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor was a scientist in his own right as he was qualified to perform the experiments allotted to him.

"He has trained as a scientist, he is a medical doctor, and a brilliant person with a very high aptitude," he said.

The experiments being conducted by Dr Muszaphar include drug resistance, protein crystallisation and mutation of cancer cells from several local universities such as Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

He said the experiments conducted by our first astronaut were of great importance in generating scientific knowl-



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edge, and not just an attempt to create an icon of a successful Malaysian space programme.

"The cost of sending one man into space should not be questioned as it hails the country stepping into the space programme. This is a genuine scientific project," he said at the Astro office in Technology Park Malaysia.

Ahmad Zaharuddin said sceptics who feel that the experiments in space would fail, do not realise that the results of the experiments would be

used as a reference by other scientists.

He likened the International Space Station to a floating scientific laboratory which offered a unique micro-gravity environment to conduct experiments.

He said the opportunity for local universities to have their own experiments conducted in space was proof of Malaysia's growing pool of scientists who were on par with other scientists around the world.

■ By Ranjeetha Pakiam
ranjeetha@nst.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: More money needs to be allocated for scientific research and development for Malaysia to experience a "big bang" in this sector.

In light of the rapid developments in science and space, Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation Sdn Bhd chairman Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Zaharuddin Idrus suggested a bigger budget for scientific research.

"We have to continue to spend money in science for us to actually experience a big bang in the industry.

"We should be spending three per cent of our gross domestic product on scientific research and development. It makes sense to spend now as it will be an investment in knowledge infrastructure."

As the Angkasawan programme has generated much excitement among Malaysians, Ahmad Zaharuddin said it was an opportune time to start investing more in this area.

Ahmad Zaharuddin, a former science adviser to former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah