

Championing the interests of Muslims

THE establishment of the Institute of Halal Research and Management (IHRAM) on 1 Jan 2010 is consistent with the Islamic Science University of Malaysia's (USIM) objective of establishing a centre of excellence to achieve the university's vision and mission in research, halal management and training services.

IHRAM's aim is to resolve halal (permissible) and haram (prohibited) issues based on science and technology with the guidance of the Quran and sunnah. IHRAM is taking the first step in championing issues that are important to the Malaysian Muslim community, specifically in the context of food and nutrition through analysis and scientific research.

IHRAM has top of the line equipment in its laboratory, which can determine the quality and quantity of nutrition and content in food, as well as whether it complies with the laws of syarak or otherwise. IHRAM's laboratory was conferred 'Bionexus Lab Partner' status by Biotech Corp. The status, which spans five years will be launched this month. IHRAM's unique multidisciplinary approach integrates the logical (aqli) and guidance from the Quran (naqli).

The objective of IHRAM is to identify and facilitate in resolving cen-

tures old and contemporary issues affecting Muslims by using classical knowledge and modern technology based on the Quran and sunnah. IHRAM has been entrusted to drive the university to reach out and engage with the worldwide community and encourage active participation, as well as empower the people with knowledge for the well-being of the community.

The activities conducted by IHRAM are focused on building capacity, training, services and research on matters of halal and haram. IHRAM aims to empower young Muslim leaders and encourage them to participate in civic and leadership development, community development strategies and technologies based on Islamic studies.

IHRAM also provides sample analysing services to external parties (industries or government bodies) for nutritional labels, identifying contaminants, consumer products, metabolomics and detecting food adulteration. Besides that, IHRAM is also working with one of USIM's centres of excellence, the Fatwa Management and Research Institute where research on matters regarding things that are unclear whether it is halal or haram (syubhah) can be resolved together

with help from the Quran and sunnah. This partnership is likely to resolve a lot of issues that are unclear in the preparation of halal food while providing knowledge and awareness to the society.

IHRAM holds workshops relating to halal and haram issues of food products. The workshops are conducted by experts who are USIM lecturers. These programmes are done in theory and practical concern food processing from the aspect of quality control and nutritional quantity using laboratory equipment. The workshops also educate the participants about the source and stipulations for halal food according to syarak (Islamic religious) law. The collaborations between IHRAM and government or private agencies are specifically focused on laboratory analysis and the exchange of information and ideas which can contribute to improving the quality of halal food in Malaysia.

One of the agencies conducting such a programme is the Halal Industry Development Corporation (HDC). The programme with HDC is called the Halal Executive Programme (HEP) which is aimed at creating job opportunities, especially for youths who have not had the chance to pursue higher education.

Through the programme, participants will be able to venture into halal food production, specifically in the field of halal slaughtering in the 'HALJOB' programme with a company called Global Integrity Products (GIPS). They will undergo two months training in Islamic education and the proper method of slaughtering animals before being sent to slaughterhouses all over the world.

The programme will enable them to improve their understanding of Islam as well as earn a living while contributing to the production of halal food. IHRAM is also working on a 'HALJOB' programme for food handlers.

IHRAM was a co-organiser along with ASIF International and GIPS for the International Halal Pharmaceutical (HALPHARM) conference which was launched in June last year. Addi-

tionally, under the 'Knowledge Transfer Programme,' the institute worked with the Ministry of Higher Education and HDC on the development of halal pharmaceutical training modules.

This year, IHRAM will be the organiser along with ASIF International, GIPS and International Halal Cosmetic Development Corporation for a HALCOS conference which is an international halal cosmetics seminar.

IHRAM is determined to be the source of reference to interested parties who are looking to venture into halal food management by working together on relevant studies with local and international universities. IHRAM's journey to champion for the interests of Muslims relating to halal food and products is not an easy path but they are determined to strive hard to achieve their mission.

