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**Mohd Khaled (centre) prays together with ministry secretary-general Datuk Dr Zulkefli A. Hassan (left) and Higher Education Department director-general Prof Datuk Dr Radin Umar Radin Sohadi, before breaking fast.**

# R&D boost

**T**HE COUNTRY's four research universities have been allocated RM90.8mil each as additional funding under Budget 2009.

Higher Education Minister Datuk Seri Mohd Khaled Nordin said that would enable them to further strengthen their research and development capabilities.

The four research universities – Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Putra Malaysia – were initially allocated RM153mil each under the Ninth Malaysia Plan.

Khaled said that next year's budget had seen a substantial increase for the higher education sector, from RM12bil to RM14.1bil.

"Two-third's of the allocation will be used for operational expenditure and one third for development purposes," he said in his speech at a *buka puasa* he hosted for the media on Wednesday.

In line with efforts to boost graduate employability, the allocation for internship programmes has also been increased from RM80mil this year to RM120mil next year.

"Of this figure, RM20mil will be spent on professional certification programmes to further improve graduates' skills and marketability," said Khaled.

He added that for the rest of the year, the ministry would concentrate on implementing several other programmes under the National Higher Education Strategic Plan, including the MyBrain15 initiative to produce more PhD holders.

Khaled also took the opportunity to thank the media for the cooperation extended to him since he assumed his post in March.

"The media has been very supportive of the programmes organised by the Ministry," he said. — *By SIMRIT KAUR*