



Dr Ahmad (centre) holding samples of the Z II together with Prof Mohd Saleh Jaafar (right) and Prof Dr Siddiq Ibrahim Abdel Wahab, who was part of the research team.

# UPM finds cure for cervical cancer

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**A** FIRST-of-its-kind natural compound for the prevention and treatment of cervical cancer has been developed using rhizomes from the lempoyang herb.

Developed by Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) lecturer and research associate Dr Ahmad Bustamam Abdul, the compound named Z II, serves as an adjunct to synthetic cancer drugs.

The product of extensive research since 2002, Z II was actually an accidental discovery when Dr Ahmad Bustamam's graduate students found out the lempoyang's anti-cancer properties by chance.

UPM labs have since developed Z II into its current ready-to-be solution form.

Administered via douches and supposito-

ries, Z II acts as an anti-neoplastic by targeting precancerous cells of the cervix.

Dr Ahmad Bustamam said that as a natural pure compound, Z II showed unusually high efficacy, comparable to that of synthetic anti-cancer drugs in the market without the side effects which include hair loss, tiredness and a poor digestive system, among others.

"The product is useful as an adjunct to current chemotherapy treatment," said Dr Ahmad Bustamam in a press conference at UPM, yesterday.

"As lempoyang is found abundantly in Malaysia, the product, when commercialised, will be competitively priced and this will reduce the cost of treating cervical cancer."

Research on the drug's effectiveness has been conducted on cervical cancer cell samples and lab rats respectively, and

results show that high dosages of Z II do not cause damage to normal tissue cells.

Compared to synthetic drugs which cost millions on research alone, Z II was developed on a "shoestring budget" of RM1.039mil in grants from the Government and the National Cancer Council (Makna).

Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Malaysian females after breast cancer.

Normally affecting women in their 30s and 40s, the cancer is primarily caused by the human papillomavirus (HPV), which is sexually transmitted.

Newly-appointed UPM deputy vice-chancellor (research and innovation) Prof Dr Mohd Saleh Jaafar said that Z II was ready for commercialisation and encouraged companies to assist the university in promoting the compound.