

Three varsities join forces to manage leptospirosis

SERDANG: Three universities are teaming up to train skilled laboratory technicians to accurately diagnose leptospirosis.

Project leader Prof Dr Zamberi Sekawi from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) said the main challenge in dealing with leptospirosis was the clinical diagnosis, as some cases were detected late.

To the untrained eye, leptospirosis can resemble other diseases such as dengue, bird flu and hepatitis.

“That’s why we have to check the patient’s history and see if he or she were in places prone to leptospirosis like a recreational park.

“Our expertise (in dealing with leptospirosis) is good but at the end of the day, the laboratory test will confirm whether a patient has leptospirosis.

“Our problem right now is that we don’t detect it fast enough. Our group is looking into increas-

ing the accuracy of the diagnosis,” he told reporters at a press conference at UPM here yesterday.

About 150 participants from the Health Ministry and local universities are expected to attend the training workshop conducted by local experts this Saturday.

“Early detection of leptospirosis can significantly decrease the chances of fatality in leptospirosis cases,” he said.

Spearheaded by UPM, a research network known as the Malaysia Leptospirosis Research Network or MyLepto has been established to study leptospirosis and train technicians.

The two other universities involved are Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and Universiti Sains Malaysia.

The *leptospira* bacteria is found in the urine of infected animals such as rodents, cats, cows and horses.