

# Belgian firm, UPM in research venture



From left: Dr Noriznan, Dr Chin and Khoo discussing the project after the signing ceremony

**By Ooi Tee Ching**  
bt@nstp.com.my

DESMET Ballestra, a Belgian process engineer, is collaborating with Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) to find competitive and energy-efficient ways to produce specialty fats.

"We'll be carrying out joint research with UPM to optimise the process of churning a variety of specialty fats," said Desmet Ballestra (M) Sdn Bhd managing director Khoo Kiak Kern.

"We've been doing research work with universities in Europe and the US. For palm-based specialty fats, we want to work with a local university," he said.

"As the global demand for specialty fats to make chocolate, ice cream, cake icing and vegan cheese increases, our clients would be keen on processes that heighten the quality of the food ingredients at more competitive rates," he said.

"We'll be supplying the parts for the pilot plant to UPM's Engineering Faculty soon. It will initially be able to fractionate 200kg of palm oil per trial," he told Business Times at the signing of a memorandum of understanding with UPM to optimise production and expand the variety of specialty fats from palm oil.

UPM vice-chancellor Prof Tan Sri Dr Nik Mustapha R. Abdullah said the partnership with Desmet is in line with

the government's new economic model that seeks to upgrade human capital and meet the needs of a knowledge-based economy.

"It is also important for Malaysia to invest more and stay in the forefront of palm oil nutrition. With closer working relations between the public and private sector, we can optimise our resources to arrive at definitive findings," he said.

"This initiative with Desmet Ballestra will give a better practical exposure to 100 engineering students at our university," he added.

Also present were UPM associate professor Dr Chin Nyuk Ling and lecturer Dr Mohd Noriznan Mokhtar.