Flexilicate Sdn. Bhd., one of UM startup companies, has once again made the university proud by winning the prestigious Dengue Tech Challenge which is jointly organized and supported by the Newton-Ungku Omar Fund, PlatCOM Ventures Sdn Bhd, the British Council, SME Corp, and Agensi Inovasi Malaysia. HIR congratulates Prof. Dr. Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan, Deputy Vice Chancellor and CEO of the company, for adding another feather to his cap following his company’s recent win of the prestigious Rice Bowl Awards’ Best ASEAN University Startup in 2015.

Flexilicate and the Dengue Tech Challenge

University of Malaya’s collective efforts in overcoming dengue received a major boost when one of its spin-offs – Flexilicate Sdn Bhd – managed to secure close to RM2mil in funding for their point of care, rapid dengue sensing optical chips. The prestigious fund called Dengue Tech Challenge is jointly organized and supported by the Newton-Ungku Omar Fund, PlatCOM Ventures Sdn Bhd, the British Council, SME Corp, and Agensi Inovasi Malaysia. The initiative aims to support proposals for collaborative projects that bring together experts from Malaysia and the United Kingdom to focus on commercialisation of dengue-related research and products in Malaysia.

Flexilicate, which was Rice Bowl Awards’ Inaugural Best Asean University Start-up in 2015, is a spin-off from the Integrated Lightwave Research Group at the Department of Electrical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering. The group, led by Prof Dr Faisal Rafiq Mahamd Adikan, is one of High Impact Research’s Chancellery (flagship) grant recipients for their project entitled Integrated Photonics for Biosensors. The group is one of the major contributors of intellectual properties (patents) for Chancellery HIR and among only a select few that managed to progress as far as pre-commercialising their research outcomes.

“The Dengue Tech grant will allow us to continue impacting society – and this time – in a more significant way. We hope to see our chips being used in the remotest of regions in our continual effort to save lives and reducing healthcare overhead”, Prof Rafiq responded when asked to comment about the fantastic achievement.

“We could not have secured this important grant had it not been for HIR and the excellent support from the Faculty of Engineering and the Department of Electrical Engineering. We started this work from scratch and from a photonics research point of view. We did not expect to progress this far and we are thrilled with the challenges that lie ahead in developing our dengue chip”, he further commented. Prof Rafiq added that the team is already envisioning a chip that could communicate with a mobile phone, and connect to Big Data and intelligent apps such as the UM developed Contageo which informs the public of the latest dengue outbreak location.

The Dengue Tech Challenge will see Flexilicate/ILRG, whose other members are Dr Ghafour Amouzad Mahdiraji and Dr Wong Wei Ru, collaborating with the Optoelectronics Research Centre at the University of Southampton, one of the leading optical research institutions in the world.

Winners of the Dengue Tech Challenge were announced on Monday June 27th during a ceremony in Petrosains KLCC which was attended by His Royal highness Prince Andrew, the Duke of York.