

Peru to boost science-industry links

Strategic plan for science expected within two months.

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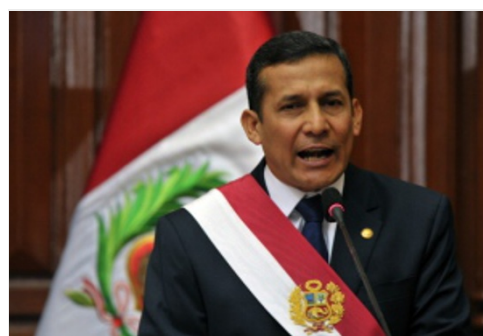
The Peruvian government will provide US\$100 million for a new project aiming to finance and promote the development of science and technology (S&T) links between the private sector, universities, and public and private research centres.

The Innovation for Competitiveness project, which will run for seven years, will also receive US\$36 million from the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) through an agreement which will be signed in the coming days, sources from Ministry of Economy and Finance told SciDev.Net.

Within two months, the country will also have its draft strategic plan on science, technology, innovation and competitiveness, which is being drawn up by a dedicated commission.

These developments are in line with recently elected President Ollanta Humala Tasso's plans to boost science, particularly through fostering cooperation between public research institutes, universities, and small and medium enterprises.

Oscar Valdez, chairman of the Council of Ministers, announced the start of the competitiveness project, while Patricia Salas, education minister, gave details on the strategic plan last week (5 January) during the presentation of the government cabinet to congress.



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Peruvian President Ollanta Humala has plans to boost the country's science base.

Valdez also announced 1,000 new S&T postgraduate fellowships for study in Peru and another 1,500 at foreign universities by 2016.

He said another initiative will aim to broaden full access to broadband Internet in the country to improve access to tele-health, tele-education and e-government services.

Experts had criticised the 2012 budget for science, which had not been increased from 0.1 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) — one of the lowest in the region — but they said they hope the figure will go up after the commission presents its strategic plan.

Benjamín Marticorena, former chairman of the Science and Technology National Council (CONCYTEC) and member of the commission, said



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there is a growing awareness within the Ministry of Economy and Finance of the need to promote partnerships between universities, research institutes and companies that are consolidated with the project.

"The first S&T IADB loan, granted in 2005, was worth just US\$25 million, but it forced us to create a management team that met its tasks [of promoting research and capacity building] very well. Researchers and innovators from universities, public institutes and companies were allowed to form relations so they started a learning process that continued in the following years," he told SciDev.Net.

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