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MAHATHIR-BIOTECHNOLOGY

M'SIAN RESEARCHERS NEED TO COLLABORATE WITH FOREIGN SCIENTISTS &
ENTERPRISES

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 1 (Bernama) -- Malaysian researchers need to collaborate with foreign scientists and enterprises in order to exploit and benefit from the huge resources that the country has, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"Comparatively speaking our research & development (R&D) has not resulted in many new patents being registered, much less new enterprise being launched," he said this in his keynote address at the International Convention on Biotechnology 2002 here today.

He said this situation reflected the inadequacies within the country which had not matched the resources and potential of Malaysia.

Researchers must therefore accept the need to share their discoveries with entrepreneurs and investors while a formula for sharing must be institutionalised so that researchers get a fair return on their work, he added.

"Researchers are a special breed of people. They need a lot of patience and deep interest in their studies and work. While they can probably make a lot of money from their research, it remains for others to believe in the potential of their results and to be willing to invest large sums of money over a prolonged period before any return can be expected," he said.

Referring to the Eastern tradition, he said knowledge was not usually shared and the recipe or formula for treatment of diseases would usually die with the practitioner or at best inherited by their children.

However, Malaysia is conscious of its wealth of resources in the field of biotechnology and is not selfish to deprive the world of the wonders that can be developed from these resources.

Therefore, collaborations in research are welcomed under conditions which allow Malaysians a fair share of the benefit, Dr Mahathir added.

In the Eighth Malaysian Plan, biotechnology has been identified as a major initiative in the promotion of science and technology, R&D and technological innovation and the main implementation vehicle for this is BioValley Malaysia.

Asked to update about this programme at a press conference, Dr Mahathir said no building had been set up as yet while researches currently were done at different research centres, universities and institutions.

"We are afraid that there may be duplications in researches, so that is why we would like to gather them all at BioValley under three research institutions of genomics, pharmaceutical and agriculture," he said.

Meanwhile, BioValley is designed to enable the co-location of a critical mass of researchers, industry workers and entrepreneurs in an environment created to facilitate networking, sharing of information and ideas and the development of commercial activities pertaining to biotech.

It will incorporate research, commercial, educational, recreational and residential facilities including a zone catering specifically for manufacturing. -- BERNAMA

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