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Mahathir-BioValley

MAHATHIR INVITES JAPANESE FUNDS TO BIOVALLEY PROJECT

By: Salbiah Said

TOKYO, June 4 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today invited foreign funds from Japan to Malaysia's BioValley project.

"The BioValley project cannot be developed by Malaysia alone. It needs the cooperation from Japan.

"We hope the Japanese government can provide funds to this project," he said at a meeting with scientists and chief executive officers of Japanese pharmaceutical companies here.

Dr Mahathir, who is on a three-day visit to Japan, said that life sciences was important towards the development of new drugs, particularly in the cure and prevention of new and infectious diseases such as the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

Dr Mahathir said that Malaysia has vast bioresources but lacked the financial resources to develop the project.

"We hope the business community, researchers and the Japanese government will support this project. We welcome funds not only from Japan but also from the rest of the world," said Dr Mahathir.

The Malaysian government has initially allocated RM1 billion towards the project launched in Dengkil last month, but the amount has been scaled down by half due to financial constraints.

Earlier today, Dr Mahathir was briefed on the BioValley master plan by its architect, Dr Kisho Kurokawa.

Later in the afternoon, he visited the Riken Yokohama Institute. Established in April 2000, the institute of physical and chemical research (Riken) undertakes basic and applied scientific research in a diverse range of fields including physics, engineering, chemistry, biology and medical science.

Among the facilities available at the institute is the research centre for allergy and immunology which investigates the immune system, from the basic cause of allergies, through to the treatment of infectious diseases and carries out important research on methods to suppress patient rejection following organ transplants.

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