

18 APR 2003  
Biotechnology  
IT'S BIOVALLEY MALAYSIA NEXT

SIBU, April 18 (Bernama) -- Malaysia will set up the BioValley Malaysia project next month for research and development work in biotechnology as it is one of the 12 mega biodiversity countries in the world, said Science, Technology and Environment Minister Dato Seri Law Hieng Ding.

He said that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad was expected to perform its earth-breaking ceremony on May 20.

Speaking at a media conference here, he said that the project came next in importance to the nation after the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC).

"We need to enter this field as we're very richly endowed with natural biological resources which we should exploit to increase food production, enhance health standard and generate job opportunities," he said.

Earlier, he launched the book "Bioteknologi-Teknologi Wawasan" jointly written by Prof Dr Rahmah Mohamed of Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Dr Tan Chon Seng, a research officer with the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi), and Ng Szu Ting, a science researcher.

He also launched a biotechnology portal at the event which was attended by about 150 local secondary students here. Both were part of his ministry's programme to promote biotechnology to schools in the state.

Law said that the government was initially spending about RM500 million on the BioValley Malaysia which would be located on a 81-ha site in the MSC area in Putrajaya.

"For a start too, we will set up three institutions namely the National Institute for Agro-Biotechnology, the National Institute for Genome and Molecule Biology and the National Institute of Pharmaceutical and Nutraceutical Biotechnology," he said.

He said that they would be the key institutions of the project besides being the nation's referral centres.

Law said Malaysia could no longer afford to not doing any research and development on all relevant activities under its biodiversity and patent the results.

He said that developed countries could just take out any of its resources for R and D and patent the finding when actually the source had originated from the country.

He also announced that the town would, about two years from now, have a RM14 million chemistry laboratory to conduct scientific analysis to add to those in Kuching and Bintulu.

He said tender for the project was expected to be called for by August or September and for it to be awarded by October this year.

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