

# Malaysia wants to develop own biotech companies: PM

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The Sun - 6/12/2006

**PUTRAJAYA:** Malaysia wants to develop its own companies, human capital and entrepreneurs in the field of biotechnology, rather than let foreign multinational companies take the lead.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi said yesterday it is easy to attract big foreign biotech companies to invest here by giving them incentives but the government is not doing that.

"Our approach is different and we begin on the basis of what we are doing today. I believe we have the strength to produce a lot of things and to develop companies of our own, with unique strength and marketing products which have competitive advantage using Malaysia's natural resources," he said.

He was asked whether Malaysia would welcome direct foreign investment from countries like Singapore and Taiwan to develop the biotechnology industry as these countries are many years ahead in this field.

Abdullah was speaking to reporters after chairing the first Biotechnology International Advisory Panel meeting, attended by eight members.

The members were University of Tokyo's Prof Emeritus Dr Kenichi Arai, president of Donald

Danforth Plant Science Centre Dr Donald Beachy, director of Novartis AG Group Alexander Jetzer, California Institute for Quantitative Biomedical Research executive director Dr Regis Kelly, Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) Biomaterials Science and Engineering Laboratory's Prof Dr Chokyun Rha, MIT's Professor of Biology and Health Sciences & Technology Dr Anthony Sinskey, Curtin University of Technology's Chancellor Emeritus Dr Eric Tan, and Burrill & Company's general partner Dr Roger Wyse and managing director Dr Caroline Kovac.

Abdullah had met the IAP members early this year during the biotech exhibition in California and Texas.

He said Malaysia was interested in developing its biowealth using its abundant natural resources.

He said the IAP members' input was that the government must be continuously committed to developing the industry.

Three levels of governance have been created to implement the government's plans for biotechnology - the Biotechnology Implementation Council (BIC), Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation, and Biotechnology International Advisory Panel (BioIAP).