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PM: Streamline innovation bodies

PROPOSAL: Move to avoid duplication and ensure leaner structure, says Najib

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PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak has proposed that some government agencies involved in the innovation sector be merged or streamlined to boost efficiency and avoid duplication.

Currently, he said, the government had a host of ministries and agencies in the sector, including the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry; Finance Ministry; Energy, Green Technology and Water Ministry; Global Science Innovation Advisory Council; Economic Planning Unit; and Performance Management and Delivery Unit.

"At last count, government entities involved in innovation and technology include five departments under the Prime Minister's Department; three ministries with direct technology funding; six ministries with technology associations; three regulators; four councils that I chair; four other councils; three development corporations with funding; seven development agencies or corporations; one foundation; six research institutes; three industry associations; five mutual funds; five managed funds; and 11 funding agencies or bodies. This is a lot.

"With a myriad of entities with so many roles, there is a need for streamlining to avoid duplication.

"We need to amalgamate some agencies to have a leaner and more effective structure moving forward," he said when closing the 11th Khazanah Megatrends Forum here yesterday.



Prime Minister **Datuk Seri Najib Razak** with (from left) Khazanah Nasional deputy chairman **Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop**, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department **Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar** and Khazanah Nasional managing director **Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar** during the launch of the 'Reflections on a Decade' book at the **11th Khazanah Megatrends Forum** in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. Pic by **Asyraf Hamzah**

He said the government would continue to be invested in guiding and facilitating a knowledge-driven economy, including prioritising Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics, or STEM, and English language skills in education to cultivate future talent and develop a sustainable innovation ecosystem.

Najib said the need to have a good command of English was paramount despite the need to preserve the country's local identity, alluding to some quarters' resistance to improving their command of the language.

"In today's world, there are two forces working in opposite directions.

"The first is globalisation, which brings together people from all over

the world, while the second is a growing emphasis on local identity, where it is all about protecting one's own rules.

"This paradox is seen in countries, such as Spain and even Scotland, which, after many years, is asking for independence from the United Kingdom. This is a global phenomenon.

"Still, the need to be proficient in English is paramount. I feel we are not yet there. So, we need to push harder to enhance the level of (English) proficiency."

The government, he said, played a crucial role in innovation, having undertaken measures and policies to encourage the development of a knowledge-driven innovation economy.

Najib said these included the Multimedia Super Corridor, or MSC Malaysia, which has contributed more than RM275 billion in revenue and RM206 billion in investments, and created more than 147,000 jobs since its inception in 1996.

"These are the results that innovation-centred, government-driven initiatives can achieve."

Other initiatives include the Malaysian Global Innovation and Creativity Centre and Agensi Inovasi Malaysia, which nurture entrepreneurial ambition and innovative thinking through the provision of education resources, platforms and networks.

Present were Minister in the Prime Minister's Department **Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar**, Khazanah Na-

sional managing director **Tan Sri Azman Mokhtar** and Khazanah Nasional deputy chairman **Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Yakcop**.

National Professors' Council political cluster head **Professor Datuk Mustafa Ishak** lauded Najib's proposal to streamline the agencies.

He echoed Najib's sentiment, saying redundancy was commonplace in the sector, with a number of agencies doing the same things.

He said the sector needed synergy, and to streamline key players' efforts, a lead agency should be appointed to ensure the agencies put their heads together towards achieving the national innovation agenda.

"Collaborative efforts are important so that resources are not wasted and expertise can be tapped."