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PRIME NEWS

# Govt ready to top up PPRN aid

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**INNOVATION DRIVE: RM50m already allocated to boost firms' competitiveness**

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*Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak viewing the model of a house at an exhibition after the launch of PPRN in Putrajaya yesterday. Pic by Mohd Fadli Hamzah*

THE government is prepared to top up the RM50 million allocation for efforts to boost companies' competitiveness through innovation undertaken by universities via the Public-Private Research Network (PPRN) platform.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak, who is also Finance Minister, however, did not state the additional amount that would be allocated should the efforts show promising results in boosting products and productivity.

"I announced the RM50 million

allocation in the 2015 Budget to fund such efforts, and through PPRN, the government will provide a matching grant of up to RM50,000 for every project.

"Even the researchers and lecturers involved will get 25 per cent in consultation fees from the overall cost of research," he said at the launch of PPRN here yesterday.

Present were Second Education Minister Datuk Seri Idris Jusoh, Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Abdul Wahid Omar and Bank Negara Malaysia governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz.

PPRN is spearheaded by the Education Ministry in collaboration with the Malaysian Technology De-

velopment Corporation.

It is among the initiatives to raise productivity and strengthen Malaysia's economic development through innovation and commercialisation programmes in a knowledge-friendly ecosystem.

Najib said he believed PPRN was a game changer, as it utilised the brains in the academic world to provide solutions that could boost companies' productivity gains.

Such an initiative was implemented to assist companies, es-

pecially those of small and medium entrepreneurs, in making full use of innovation to boost competitiveness, he said.

He said the government was aware that small and medium enterprises had limited funds to form their own innovation units.

"Those in the academic sector may have limited ability to commercialise their products, since it is not their (core) business."

Najib said one could lose out if one failed to embrace innovation.

He said Malaysia must produce distinct products that are of high value and are highly sought.

"Such products use high technology to add value. Look at the iPhone.

"Buyers are willing to sleep by the roadside and pay a big sum to ensure they are among the first to own the latest model."

Najib said he believed that the country could be a highly competitive nation, as it had the innovation to position itself ahead.