

**Mini Petai's Potential In Biotechnology Industry High, Says Najib
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KERTIH, Oct 6 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the planting of the mini petai, which has the scientific name of *Leucaena Leucocephala*, could give a positive impact in the development of the country's biotechnology industry.

The plant is an important raw material for the production of biopolymer and biochemical products, he said.

"I want to encourage the planting of this mini petai as it is an eco-friendly product and can provide a positive impact on our environment.

"It will also provide our farmers an alternative," he told reporters after officiating the groundbreaking ceremony for the Green Bio L-Methionine and Thiochemicals integrated plant at the Kerteh Biopolymer Park here, Saturday.

The RM2 billion project, occupying 70 hectares in area, is a joint project between CJ CheilJedang from Korea and France-based Arkema's thiochemicals platform. It is due to start operations in December 2013.

The integrated facility will be the first such facility in the world to use a bioprocessing method for the production of L-Methionine, a form of amino acid used in the production of animal feed.

The concept would be similar to a petroleum processing plant which produces various fuel and petrochemical products from petroleum.

Bioprocessing uses components from the biomass of plants such as the mini petai, increasing the value gained from the biomass of such raw materials.

Najib said the planting of the mini petai should be expanded nationwide in order to meet the demand of the biotechnology industry.

"This plant could be planted in an area where the land does not have to be of the highest category. Its planting could even be in the medium category of land.

"I hope its planting could be expanded to other states so that our farmers can become suppliers based on the contractors criteria," he said.

The Terengganu state government recently allocated an area of 30,000 hectares as plantation land for the biomass of mini petai where 10.5 million metric tonnes of wood chips from the mini petai can be produced a year.

Terengganu last month also started a biomass plantation project in a two-hectare area in Simpan Merchang Forest in Marang.

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