

**Najib Unveils 10 EPPs That Will Bolster Gross National Revenue To RM3.6 Billion**  
**Bernama**  
**October 30, 2012**

PUTRAJAYA, Oct 30 (Bernama) -- The Biotechnology Implementation Council meeting today identified 10 Entry Point Projects (EPPs) specifically to boost the national biotechnology sector, which will create 20 trigger projects that can increase gross national revenue to RM3.6 billion, besides creating 13,600 high quality new job opportunities.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak said the biotechnology sector's current achievement has been very encouraging.

Under the phase two of the National Biotechnology Policy implementation between 2011 and 2015 with the focus to turn biotechnology industries towards business and commercialisation, there are achievements that had surpassed the set target, he said.

Under the second phase, investments attracted by biotechnology industries have touched RM12.7 billion, far exceeding the RM9 billion target set for 2015, while for the 80,000 new job target by 2015, the number has reached 64,753, he told a media conference after chairing the council meeting.

Najib said Tuesday's meeting also decided that the Biotechnology Implementation Council be renamed as the National Bioeconomy Council because the bioeconomy terminology is seen to be more comprehensive than biotechnology.

The biotechnology sector's meteoric growth has created a new industry in the country, he said, citing the example of Gevo Inc, which will invest RM1.69 billion to build a plant that will produce biochemical derivative products, biomaterial and biofuel.

"This project will turn Jerantut into a world's caviar production centre, an initiative that was beyond our imagination all these while, but now this project will be implemented via I-Caviar involving RM475 million over five years.

"This is an example of how with the technological applications, we can bring big changes to an area where we cannot bring much development.

"We can also introduce a new industry that is not indigenous to our country.

"This is a very meaningful example on how biotechnological development has a lot of positive impact on our country," he said.

Najib also said an American company will invest US\$1 billion in a integrated lobster aquaculture project in Semporna, Sabah.

He said the company, operating a chain of restaurants under the "Red Lobster" brand name, has identified Semporna and Lahad Datu waters as suitable to breed lobsters on a commercial scale.

They will rope in locals as "contract farmers" who are expected to earn RM3,000 to RM4,000 a month, he said.

"The parties involved in this project will receive guaranteed orders and the lobsters harvested will be exported to the international market.

"This is an example of how the strength that we have like the rich biodiversity and the unpolluted natural environment can be tapped to our advantage via biotechnological applications," he said.

The prime minister said the federal government will cooperate with the Sarawak state government to conduct research and development (R&D) to breed "ikan empurau" on a big scale in the state.

He said ikan empurau, which can fetch RM1,000 a kilogramme, is among the most expensive fish species in the world, but nevertheless its production was limited. "When we conduct R&D and start to breed high quality fish species, we can guarantee continuous supply.

This will provide good income to villagers whose earnings were limited previously," he said.

Najib also said the meeting decided to change the policy to help BioNexus SME companies in the country.

Based on feedback from the Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry, incentives in the form of loans, to a maximum RM3 million with five per cent interest, are found to be not very beneficial, he said.

"As a government that listens to feedback, the people's voice and industries' views, the council decided to change the policy to a RM1 million maximum grant and RM2 million loan to a maximum RM3 million limit.

"The decision was made instantly and I hope it will provide the stimulus and a strong impetus to the industries to apply to categorise the companies as BioNexus.

The decision will have an impact on the biotechnology companies' growth in the country," he said.

Najib said today's meeting also decided that funding for research and development (R&D) programmes as was announced in the 2013 Budget, including RM600 million for research universities, can be utilised to register intellectual properties that have the potential to be commercialised.

"We were told that many R&D findings cannot be patented or registered as an Intellectual Property (IP) because the fund cannot be used for the purpose.

"So, I believe today's decision will spur more R&D findings from universities to be patented. This will facilitate other parties, including Malaysia Innovation Agency, to participate in open bidding with a view to commercialise," he added.

-- BERNAMA

Copyright © 2012 BERNAMA

Source: <http://www.bernama.com/bernama/v6/newsindex.php?id=705615>