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PM touts biotechnology as key development driver

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KUALA LUMPUR: Biotechnology will benefit all races and provide the direction for the country, said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi.

Biotechnology, as the main driver of development in the five economic corridors, has an important influence in agriculture, the environment, energy resources as well as future development of scientists, he said.

"With our three areas of focus – agriculture, healthcare and industrial development – biotechnology will have a tremendous influence in the direction of our country's future," he said at the opening of BioMalaysia 2008 yesterday.

He pointed out that the emphasis on biotechnology would pose a challenge to industry players.

"These areas (corridors) are multiracial and it (the benefit) is not for a particular race only.

"Biotechnology will help improve people's lives. It will also produce many new courses in universities."

The corridors are Sabah Development Corridor, Sarawak Corridor of Renewable Energy, Northern Economic Corridor Region, East Coast Economic Corridor and Iskandar Malaysia.

Abdullah hoped the application of biotechnology, including producing more effective medications, would give Malaysians a more healthy, vibrant and active lifestyle.

He said he was glad that the Biotech International Advisory Panel, which held its third meeting on Monday, recognised Malaysia's effort to succeed in biotechnology.

Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Maximus Ongkili said the three focus of biotechnology would be applied at the corridors based on their strengths and their needs.

He said the International Advisory Panel had advised that Malaysia go back to its strengths in marine and agriculture and find ways to add value to them.

He said the meeting felt it was the right time for Malaysia to market itself more aggressively, as the Americans and other investors were looking for alternative investment opportunities.

"Malaysia is a suitable alternative. With a reasonable high growth rate of 5.5%, we are able to absorb the shock (of the meltdown in the United States)," he said.

About 2,000 delegates took part in the three-day conference and exhibition.