

Sabah, Sarawak have edge in biotechnology devt

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KOTA KINABALU: Sabah and Sarawak have added advantage in the development of biotechnology than other states in the country.

According to Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Dr Maximus Johnity Ongkili, the strength of both states lie in their rich resources in land for agriculture and sea for its marine.

"Both (Sabah and Sarawak) will benefit in the bio-economy programme," he said to reporters during the Sabah Development Corridor (SDC) bio-economy briefing held at a resort near here yesterday.

The event was launched by Chief Minister Datuk Seri Musa Haji Aman.

Dr Ongkili also said that although only 13 out of 210 companies in the country accorded with the Bionexus status were from Sabah and Sarawak, he believed that with the bio-economy transformation underway, more new entities from the two states as well as from other states would look into setting up their business operation here.

"We are confident that the numbers will increase as a result from investments and bio-economy development which were sealed today," he said.

Dr Ongkili also expressed his confidence that the Sabah Development Corridor blueprint will become an impetus to the bio-economy transformation programme in Sabah and

stressed that it will become an important contributor to the bio-economy outcome of the country.

In his speech, he also mentioned on the agreements that were signed yesterday.

The first one was between Biotechcorp and Sabah Economic Development and Investment Authority (SEDIA).

On the contract, the minister mentioned that it encompassed several key bio-economy sectors based on biotechnology.

"The cooperation in the agriculture biotechnology sector shall cover the development of temperate climate vegetations in Kundasang; the aquaculture project in Semporna and Kudat and the development of premium food chain with modern biotechnology platform at the Sabah Agro-Industrial Precinct," he said.

He added that several proposals in the development of biotechnology industries include the development of the Palm Oil Industrial Cluster (POIC) Bio-refinery Complex in Sandakan; the agreement with Sawit Kinabalu Sdn Bhd which aims to provide sustainable supply of Biomass Sawit to the Bio-refinery complex; a joint development of the Complex Bio-refinery based on wood and forest resources in Lahad Datu and the proposal for the joint effort between Sabah Softwoods Berhad for biomass supply.

And under the healthcare biotechnology sector, a joint project between Desa Cattle (S)

Sdn Bhd and Sawit Kinabalu in SAIP has been proposed to explore the development of halal Bovine Low Molecular Weight Heparin which is a high value pharmaceutical product.

"All the activities planned are aimed for the development of Bionexus companies in Sabah and I am certain that in the near future, the products from the projects will be launched and this will result in the increased number of Bionexus companies that are operating in Sabah," he said.

The second agreement signed yesterday was a joint research to explore the Danum Valley between the National Institute of Biotechnology Malaysia (NIBM) and Yayasan Sabah, FRIM, and Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

The pioneer research aims to create bio-prospect activities from the biodiversity resources that exist in the area, he said.

"The first phase of the project will take place in November with the funding of RM1 million from the Ministry of Science, Technology and Industry. It aims to build a platform for sustainable development of high value pharmaceutical products and the industry focusing on insects," Dr Ongkili said.

He added that they aim to prepare a distribution profile of the insect resources at Danum Valley and develop a repository biodiversity sample.

Also present was Biotechcorp chairman Professor Emeritus Dato Dr Zakri Abdul Hamid.