

Pursue R&D for more innovations, biotech researchers are told

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KOTA KINABALU: Researchers and experts in the biotechnology industry need to pursue their path through research and development (R&D) as it would lead to new discoveries that could be translated into innovations.

Science, Technology and Innovation Ministry Secretary-General Datuk Seri Dr Mohd Azhar Yahaya said the discoveries made by researchers and experts had been capitalised by the industry to spur the economy towards sustainable development for the benefit of mankind.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank the scientific community for taking part in the process of developing the biotechnology industry," he said at the launch of the two-day Fifth Biotechnology Symposium here Wednesday.

Organised by Universiti Malaysia Sabah's (UMS) Biotechnology Research Institute, the symposium themed "Biotechnology for Sustainable Development to Meet Global Challenges" gathers more than 80 scientists, academics, students, industry representatives and professionals.

Mohd Azhar said the corporatisation of research institutes under the National Institutes of Biotechnology Malaysia (NIBM) helped the institutes focused on market driven R&D and freely form a network of collaborations with local and international universities, as well as companies.

He said the facility-sharing concept introduced by NIBM's would reduce the government expenditure on the sophisticated and high-end scientific in-

struments.

"The three research institutes consolidated and corporatised under NIBM were Agro-Biotechnology Institute, Malaysia Institute of Pharmaceuticals and Nutraceuticals, and Malaysia Genome Institute," said, adding the institutes focused on biotechnology R&D and provided scientific analysis services.

Mohd Azhar said Malaysia had established the National Biotechnology Policy in 2005 that aimed to turn the biotechnology sector into one of the key economic drivers, contributing five per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product by 2020.

Thus, he said, Malaysian Bioeconomy Development Corporation (Bioeconomy Corp) has played a role as an agency to facilitate the biotechnology and bio-based industries in Malaysia such as through BioNexus programme and Bioeconomy Transformation Programme (BTP).

Mohd Azhar said several programmes were carried out by Bioeconomy Corp on that matter, and to date, the company had facilitated 283 BioNexus status companies under the BNP programme and 77 projects as trigger projects under the BTP.

The BTP is targeted to contribute RM48 billion of the gross national income in 2020, create 170,000 jobs and attract RM50 billion in investments by 2020.

Meanwhile, UMS Vice-Chancellor Prof Datuk Dr D Kamarudin D Mudin hoped at the end of symposium, various partnerships and ideas could be shared to discuss measures and map out a sustainable programme from a biotechnology perspective. - Bernama