

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN
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Marketing biotech firms globally

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PUTRAJAYA: Ten years since its inception, Biotech Corp Malaysia is now pushing to boost the global marketability of local biotech companies via strategic initiatives with internationally renowned parties, said chief executive officer Datuk Dr Mohd Nazlee Kamal.

One such initiative is the partnership with Los Angeles-based Larta Institute to mentor BioNexus status companies under the agency's bio-economy accelerator programme.

Nazlee told *StarBiz* that experts from Larta had been training local biotechnology companies that had been granted BioNexus status on strategies to fully maximise their commercial potential.

The BioNexus status is awarded by Biotech Corp to qualified companies, both local and foreign, operating in the biotechnology or life sciences industries in Malaysia.

The status also comes with incentives, grants and guarantees to assist in the development of the respective bio-based companies.

To date, there are 261 companies with BioNexus status, of which 70% are local companies.

Nazlee said: "We have been training these BioNexus companies on what it really takes to become global players. The next five years is all about going global.

"This will include product design. We are talking to the Malaysian Design Council to help our companies make their designs more appealing for the global market."

For the second phase of the National Biotechnology Policy (NBP) which ends this year, Biotech Corp has exceeded its investment target by over RM11bil, attracting about RM21.3bil so far.

For the third phase between 2016 and 2020, Nazlee said the agency would be targeting RM15bil in domestic and foreign invest-



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ments.

According to Nazlee, BioNexus companies have brought in RM5.13bil in investments since 2011.

Of the BioNexus companies, there are 147 involved in the agricultural sector, 42 in the industrial sector and 72 in biomedical. About 30% are bumiputra companies.

During the first phase of the NBP between 2006 and 2010, the biotechnology industry contributed 2.2% to the country's gross domestic product (GDP) against the target of 2.5%, said Nazlee.

For the second phase ending this year, the target is 4%.

To accelerate the development of BioNexus companies, BioTech Corp has secured a partnership with the California Institute for Quantitative Biosciences (QB3).

Nazlee noted that eight local universities were involved in the initiative, which sought to develop entrepreneurs.

QB3, through its Startup in A Box system, has launched over 300 bio-based companies within three years through mentorship and seed funding.

"We are currently conducting a programme with QB3 for local universities.

"The whole idea is about entrepreneurship. We have three personnel from QB3 who have been mentoring our local incubators," he said.

The aim is to get these local incubators to churn out more biotech companies.

"I would say if you have about 20 companies, maybe five will succeed.

"So that means we need to build a huge funnel, to create more successful companies," added Nazlee.

Towards this, Biotech Corp launched its office in San Francisco in June last year, hoping to secure global investment and raise funds for local biotech companies here.

On competing with industry giants like China and India for foreign investments, Nazlee said investors came to Malaysia for completely different reasons.

"We are not competing with China or India. China has a huge domestic market. Companies may want to go there purely for their domestic market.

"Malaysia is a small country, perhaps they look at us as a platform to reach Asean - a market of 600 million people. The dynamics of the business model for investing in Malaysia and Asean or investing in China and India are not the same.

"Malaysia is good in terms of infrastructure, political stability, skilled workforce and language."

However, the weaknesses of many local companies, he said, was that they struggled to monetise their technology.

"You may have good technology but you may not be able to translate it into good money. That is always a challenge to our young entrepreneurs," said Nazlee.

He cited a recent initiative by a company in Kapilit, Tawau which used its biogas plant to provide electricity not just to the mill, but also free electricity to 250 houses in the neighbouring village.

"Previously, the villagers were only getting about seven hours of electricity per day, but now they get 24 hours.

"We have 400 over palm oil mills in the country, so just imagine if we can power up the whole country with such method," he said.

Another interesting BioNexus status company in Penang has become the first in the world to undertake oyster production in a pond. This technology was developed by Universiti Sains Malaysia.

Also, a Universiti Putra Malaysia graduate has developed a technology to produce millions of clones for pineapples whereby every fruit looks and taste almost identical.

"They have developed the technology in-house and managed to patent the process. These are just some of the technologies coming out of our own universities," he said.

Acknowledging the successes of BioNexus companies with industry awards will be among the highlights of the upcoming BioMalaysia and Asean Bioeconomy 2015 conference.

In conjunction with Biotech Corp's 10th anniversary this year, the organisation is hosting the event from Aug 17-19 at the Putra World Trade Centre. Ten countries and 200 exhibitors will be participating in the conference, with over 10,000 visitors expected.

Watch the video
thestar.com.my/Videos/

Beberapa negeri di Semenanjung dilanda ribut, hujan lebat

KUALA LUMPUR - Jabatan Meteorologi Malaysia semalam mengeluarkan amaran ribut petir, hujan lebat berserta angin kencang berlaku sehingga tengah malam tadi melanda beberapa buah negeri di semenanjung negara.

Menerusi laman web ras-

minya, Jabatan Meteorologi memaklumkan negeri-negeri yang terlibat dengan amaran tersebut ialah Perlis, Kedah, Pulau Pinang, Selangor, Wilayah Persekutuan Kuala Lumpur, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor dan Pahang.

"Kawasan yang terlibat

ialah di seluruh Perlis; di Kedah pula berlaku di daerah Kubang Pasu, Kota Setar, Yan, Pendang, Sik dan Baling; barat daya Pulau Pinang; Selangor diramal berlaku di daerah Kuala Selangor, Petaling, Klang dan Hulu Langat; Kuala Lumpur dan di Negeri Sembilan ialah

di Tampin dan Rembau.

"Melaka, daerah Alor Gajah dan Jasin; Johor di Segamat, Ledang, Muar, Batu Pahat dan Pontian manakala Pahang diramal berlaku di Rompin," kata laman web rasmi Jabatan Meteorologi yang dikemaskini pada pukul 5.04 petang semalam,