

**KERATAN AKHBAR-AKHBAR TEMPATAN**  
**TARIKH: 28 NOVEMBER 2016 (ISNIN)**

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## Forecast for the week – thunderstorms and heavy rain

**PETALING JAYA:** Malaysians should continue to be on guard as heavy rains are expected in the peninsula this week.

Thunderstorms and rains are expected in most states until Saturday.

The Department of Irrigation and Drainage (DID) flood information website (<http://publicinfobanjir.water.gov.my>) earlier sent out warnings to residents of Kampung Olak Sepam in Muar and Penarik in Ledang, both in Johor, after rivers

in both areas surpassed the danger level.

The river in Kampung Olak Sepam hit the danger level of 2.42m at 8.30am and rose to as high as 3m yesterday.

The river level in Penarik hit the danger level of 2.39m late Saturday and only started to subside around 3am yesterday.

The DID, however, did not issue any flood warnings on its website yesterday.

Last week, the **Malaysian**

**Meteorological Department (Met-Malaysia)** indicated that more than 500mm of rain was expected for Kelantan, Terengganu, Pahang and east Johor until the end of the year.

The rainfall, according to Met-Malaysia, is typical for this time of year due to the north-east monsoon.

MetMalaysia's weather forecast indicated that Perlis, Kedah, Penang and north Perak would receive lower than normal rainfall (less than 150mm) between January and February next year.

Other areas in the peninsula are forecast to receive normal rainfall of between 100mm and 300mm.

Between March and April next year, all states are expected to receive normal rainfall of between 100mm and 350mm.

National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) director-general Datuk Zaitun Ab Samad said the high tide in December was not expected to be as serious as in October.

On Nadma's flood preparations,

Zaitun said the agency was always ready to coordinate all forms of assistance to affected residents.

"There are so many departments and agencies involved and there are also many NGOs wanting to help. Nadma is the agency that gets everybody together. We consolidate and coordinate," she said.

Among efforts that were undertaken in cooperation with other agencies was the preparation of sandbags as a temporary measure to withstand high tides, Zaitun said.

**KERATAN AKHBAR**  
**MALAY MAIL (LETTERS) : MUKA SURAT 13**  
**TARIKH : 28 NOVEMBER 2016 (ISNIN)**

## Keep motorists out of open carpark during floods

THE management of IOI Mall should have taken immediate corrective action to barricade the open car parking areas, to stop motorists using the parking lots, knowingly that the place is flood-prone and that the Meteorological Department had reported that heavy rain is expected to occur this month.

Surely they have read news reports on flood warnings that flood-prone areas will be hit because these places are highly vulnerable at this time of the year.

The moon is nearest in 68 years this month and this phenomena, coupled with heavy rainstorms, causes the rivers and monsoon drains to overflow their banks. Thus, flood-prone areas and low-lying places would get flooded.

The flood in IOI Mall on Nov 15 was not the first incident. The management should have taken quick and appropriate action to stop shoppers using the open carpark by barricading it to keep motorists out.

On that day, I had to turn away from entering into the basement carpark at Aeon 1BIG shopping mall in Subang Jaya. All the entrances into the shopping mall were closed. The management had got a coloured plastic stripe runner tied up the entrances into the mall. This is to stop motorists driving inside the car park.

This was a good action taken by the management to prevent shoppers' cars caught in a flood, should the carpark gets flooded.

However, the IOI Mall management had overlooked the need to close the carpark.

What the management should do now is to work with the council to see that a dyke is built around monsoon drains to prevent water overflowing into the open carpark area.

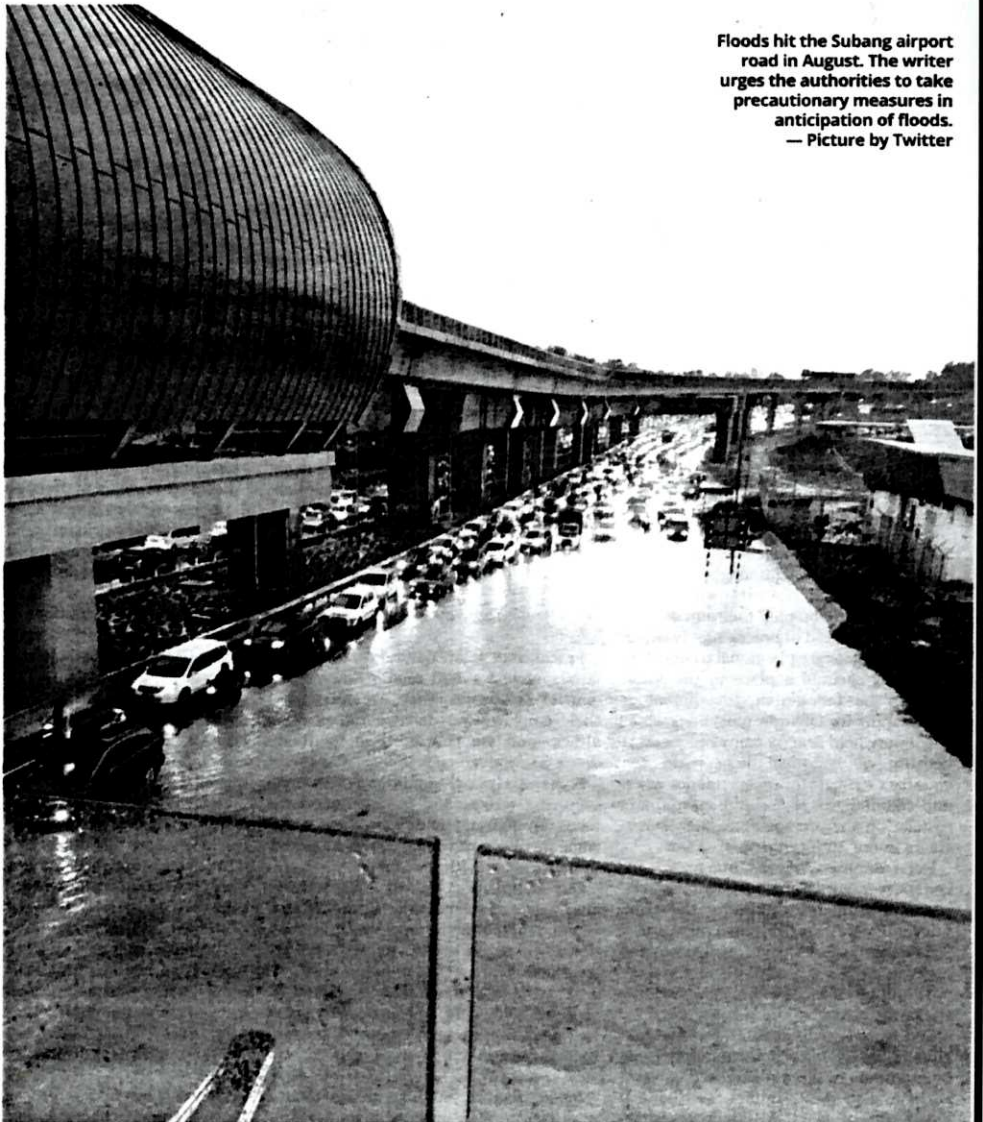
Before this, the monsoon drains and rivers should be widen and deepen to allow rainwater to flow out into the river.

The IOI Mall management and the council should also start to build a dyke to raise the walls of the river. This should put a stop to water overflowing the river banks.

There is yet another thing to consider and that is to find a suitable place to turn it into a rainwater retention pond or to use a nearby lake (if available) to save an existing flood-prone area from being hit by flood again.

To all flood-prone areas in the country, the authorities should also use these suggestions to stop floods hitting the place again.

LAU BING  
SUBANG JAYA



Floods hit the Subang airport road in August. The writer urges the authorities to take precautionary measures in anticipation of floods.  
— Picture by Twitter



KERATAN AKHBAR  
THE STAR (ROCK THE CRADLE) : MUKA SURAT 10  
TARIKH : 28 NOVEMBER 2016 (ISNIN)

## Moving forward in biotech

For real progress to be made, we need time, significant resources and perseverance to achieve the success we crave.

By Razif Abdul Aziz

I WOULD like to applaud Dr Ahmad Ibrahim who recently wrote an article (Biotech Plan Needs a Rethink, *The Star*, Nov 10); finally someone, from the Malaysian Academy of Sciences, no less, has written about this perplexing subject on a public platform.

I found myself in the biotech space in 2006, looking at existing regulatory frameworks aligned with the National Biotech Policy (NBP) that was launched in 2005, and later, managing the BioNexus framework, which was to be the cornerstone of the NBP. I was a novice in an area filled with old hands the likes of Datuk Dr Mohd Noor Embi, Professor Yasmin, Datuk Isa and Dr Mahalechumy, people who were already pushing the biotech agenda before me.

Dr Ahmad pointed to two key issues, namely the overemphasis on the business side of biotech at the cost of the more developmental aspects and the overdependence on FDIs as a prime mover for its development.

I had written for the *Petri Dish*, a science newspaper, in September 2011 about the importance of the local economy as a precursor to wooing FDIs (Relevance of Local Economy to Woo FDIs). I made the argument that unlike sectors such as E&E and other manufacturing based sectors, Malaysia has limited expertise in terms of large-scale manufacture of biotech products and services. There was very little we could leverage on.

The level of technology, depth and experience required was simply not there back in the early days of the NBP. In such a situation, we found ourselves at a disadvantage. Our biodiversity and (abundance of) biomass alone would not translate into a biotech industry. Sure they are key components, but more critical are homegrown technology, know-how and expertise. We were simply not at a level where we can woo healthcare or industrial biotech manufacturers easily without having to give up a lot in the form of special incentives, funds and other sweeteners.

The early FDIs that came in was characterised by a lot of incentives thrown their way, and until today, I don't know what form of real "on the ground" benefits we will be able to reap from them. They exist almost in their own worlds, detached from the grassroots "biotech" sector we call our own. This has been a lost opportunity for us.

FDIs are an essential component in the development mix, but focusing on them at the expense of local biotech development is just shooting ourselves in the foot. If we had focused on getting the local economy up to speed first we might have stood a chance at leveraging FDIs more to our advantage.

While everyone was drawn by the prospect of potentially ground-breaking cures to diseases offered by our flora and fauna, nobody paid attention to the fact that such an endeavour would require immense resources, time and R&D, none of which we were willing to undertake. We wanted results now so we made do with plant extracts without any claims and sold them in the FMCG market.

Sure, it was good business at first, but products like these quickly become commoditised with so many "me too" products hitting the market. Without R&D, trials and other evidenced-based validation, they eventually struggle and fail in a competitive market. I remember speaking to a biotech International Advisory Panel member and he commented that we do have the talent, but needed time to develop the necessary depth and cross-disciplinary experience required for real success to emerge.

This leads me to the fact that we have to manage our expectations. The NBP was perhaps overly ambitious, trying to do in 15 years what the West, with all its technological prowess, did in 30 years or more.

Surely we need to take into account the ingredients we are working with and understand that for real progress to be made, we need time, significant resources and perseverance to achieve the success we crave.

It's a long road to success and many billions of dollars. If we want it easy, we will have to make do with lower tech stuff which has competitive advantages that will be easy to duplicate. With hindsight, I think we could have done better consulting India on how it managed to establish themselves as a leader

in this area, be it in herbal or drug development and manufacture.

The local ecosystem also needs to up its game. Unlike other sectors where innovation can just as easily come from the private sector, in biotech, it's a bit more complicated given the cost and time involved. This means that our public universities and research institutes will very likely be the main source of innovation in this space. Their role therefore is very critical.

They need to engage with industry earlier and more frequently to ensure innovations have a better chance of being commercialised. The industry and markets are the final arbiters of what makes an innovation a commercial success.

For that reason, university-industry engagements are a critical success factor to ensure someone picks up the baton and complete the commercialisation process.

Good researchers with innovations will count for naught if the industry does not think there is commercial potential for them.

In addition to more meaningful engagements, we need to move away from proprietary programmes and initiatives. Most of the high value biotech innovations we talk about today require a multi-disciplinary approach. No one party has all the resources required to pull it off. We need to work together better.

Finally, we need to refocus our attention on the biotech grassroots, the BioNexus companies we have churned out over the years. They represent the brave and the foolish who have spent time and money to commercialise biotech innovations. Some are begin-

ning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, more than 10 years after the NBP was launched. Let's not give up on them now.

So where do we go from here? Firstly, let's look at the multi-million ringgit FDIs that have already parked themselves here in Malaysia. Let's work closely with them and iron out the many implementation issues. Failure is not an option as it will send the wrong signals to investors.

Secondly, put the lead agency in question back on a stronger footing. It needs to be sustainable over the long term and some difficult decisions will have to be made. What is needed is a new vibrancy, the same vibrancy the ICT and digital space has enjoyed for a number of years now and is still going strong today. People need to get excited about biotech again.

Thirdly, shift the focus back to grassroots innovation and entrepreneurs. Arguably, they are a more sustainable engine for local biotech's long term growth. Meanwhile, FDIs can still be targets of opportunity. They will be even more rewarding in future as our own ecosystem matures.

And finally, we need to be consultative and inclusive in our efforts. We need to pool our resources especially in these challenging times. No man is an island.



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