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KERATAN AKHBAR
THE STAR (BRIEFS) : MUKA SURAT 02
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MTDC allocates RM15mil for startups

Malaysian Technology Development Corporation Sdn Bhd (MTDC) will allocate RM15mil in 2017 to its Business Start-Up Fund (BSF), pending approval, to about five companies.

CEO Datuk Norhalim Yunus said MTDC was looking for more startups involved in robotics and automation to receive BSF funding next year.

"As we are moving towards becoming a developed nation in 2020, our manufacturing industries especially the small and medium enterprises should be looking at adopting more automation to improve their productivity and reduce cost, as well as their dependence on foreign labour.

"Hence, we need more startups that have

the technology to be groomed, to enable them to provide to our industries, hopefully at lower cost and higher efficiency," he said at MTDC's Start-up Scale-up event last week.

At the event, four startups received a total of RM18mil in BSF funding — Techcapital Resources (RM4.44mil), Gremax Holdings (RM4.48mil), Ginger and Coconut Development (RM4.47mil) and Cell Tissue Technology (RM5mil).

Since the fund's inception in 2011, a total of RM126mil has been approved for 30 companies via Convertible Promissory Notes (CPN).

For this year, Norhalim said, MTDC had approved about RM39mil to nine companies from this year's RM15mil allocation, plus the carry-forward funds from previous years.

Norhalim said the Start-Up Scale-Up event could promote the products and services of the recipient companies and highlight their potential to scale to a higher level.

Citing Techcapital Resources, he said the pioneering Malaysian company's technology opened doors for SMEs to upgrade their production capacity using affordable and customised robotic systems.

Meanwhile another company, Cell TissueTechnology, made products that reduced the need for doctors to remove large portions of the skin from a patient in trauma cases or skin ulcers. Norhalim noted that it was also available to the cosmetics industry.

Agricultural use for Lynas residue

> Tests show processed material doubled growth of crops

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KUALA LUMPUR: Rare earth mining company Lynas Corporation hopes to process residue from its production operations for commercial use next year.

Lynas Malaysia Sdn Bhd vice-president Datuk Mashal Ahmad said 211,454 metric tonnes of residue are being stored at its advanced material plant and it is collaborating with two institutions to turn the waste into material for use in agriculture.

He said Universiti Putra

Malaysia (UPM) and the Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) is running field tests on a soil conditioner that was derived from its water leach purification (WLP) residue.

"Researchers from both institutes have tested this conditioner, called "Condisoil", on various crops including corn, kenaf, padi, coconut and cattle-grass.

"After two harvest seasons, the initial results are amazing, with the growth rate of the plants doubled using Condisoil," he told a press conference.

However, Mashal said approval for Condisoil's commercial usage can only be determined once tests on a third harvest are completed in June.

"Currently, all test results by various bodies, including the **Malaysian Nuclear Agency**

(**Nuclear Malaysia**) and **Sirim** on the two earlier harvests show that the usage of Condisoil has no ill effects on the plants or the atmosphere," he said, adding that Lynas has been funding both UPM and Mardi to conduct its research independently.

Lynas chief executive officer Amanda Lacaze said the residue material will be stored in facilities that meet the design requirements of permanent deposit facilities.