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BiotechCorp to draft biomass initiative with govt agencies

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KUALA LUMPUR: [Malaysian Biotechnology Corp \(BiotechCorp\)](#) is working with other government agencies and industry players to draft a biomass initiative which, among others, will ensure that the industry has sufficient raw materials.

(Biomass is plant material or agricultural waste, such as that from the palm oil industry, used for energy source.)

[Chief executive officer Datuk Dr Mohd Nazlee Kamal](#) said BiotechCorp and various parties, including Agensi Inovasi Malaysia and the [Malaysian Industry-Government Group](#) for High Technology (MiGHT)/Global Science and Innovation Advisory Council, were currently working on the first draft.

He expected the draft to be ready before year-end, and that the recommendations could be presented to the Government in the near future.

“The draft will say how we should move forward with our biomass. I think there'll be some policies on carbon credits to ensure that the environment is taken care of, as we do not want any polluting industry to be created from this biomass initiative,” he said.

“Then we'll look at whether we have enough yield and, also very importantly, if we were to convert the cellulosic materials (biomass) into glucose, we have to make sure it stays in the country for use in downstream activities (rather than being exported). Many of our chemical businesses will use it as raw material. That will promote more investment. If we have the glucose here, every potential investor which sees it as its feedstock will invest here,” he said. (Glucose is an important raw material for fermentation-based products.)

BiotechCorp is working at enhancing the “bioeconomy” in terms of the policy on biofuel as well as the strategy on industrial biotechnology and agro-biotech.

Nazlee said it hoped the Government's Performance Management and Delivery Unit ([Pemandu](#)) would consider making bioeconomy one of the national key areas.

Agro-biotech could provide the raw materials for the industrial biotech, he said. “We have to develop our own IP (intellectual property) on how to convert cellulosic materials efficiently into glucose and to then manufacture biofuel.”

BiotechCorp has a two-pronged strategy of attracting FDI and nurturing local companies to be regional and global players.

“The criteria for a good FDI is that it is environment friendly, brings more jobs to Malaysians and, at the same time, opens up potential collaborations with local institutions and companies. Even though we may be competing (with the foreign companies), we're open for collaboration, There's a new term called *coopetition* (cooperative competition). That

kind of framework will be very ideal for the biotech industry. Of course, everybody is competing to get a market share, but the market is big enough for all,” he said.

Nazlee sees Malaysia as a potentially important hub for European countries and the United States to enter the emerging market. “Malaysia holds IP positioning very highly, has one of the best infrastructures in Asia, and is very stable in terms of politics. Moreover, our economy is growing in a controlled and sustainable fashion, and we have enough manpower to drive the industry,” he said.

He said BiotechCorp planned to work more closely with the Malaysian Genome Institute, Institute of Pharmaceuticals and Nutraceuticals and Agri-biotechnology Institute to develop the industry further in terms of research and development.

“We’re also looking at local universities in terms of IP development which we may be able to commercialise,” said Nazlee.

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