

Bio-XCell Malaysia gets \$80 mn in investments

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Bio-XCell is one of the most promising projects of Malaysia, which is planned to push the growth of the bioscience industry. It is situated in the city of Nusajaya, and is a part of the lush green landscape of the development corridor of Iskandar Malaysia. Nusajaya, which is located in the resource-rich state of Johor, Malaysia, is a 50 minutes drive away from the concrete jungle of the central business district of life science hub Singapore.

The Bio-XCell park was incorporated in 2009 and is a joint venture between the Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation, better known as the BiotechCorp, and UEM Land Holdings, a real estate investment and business development company.

At the helm of the affairs is Mr Rizatuddin Ramli, CEO, Bio-XCell, who took charge of the project in 2011. According to him, [Bio-XCell will serve as the biotechnology accelerator for the Malaysian biotechnology industry](#). "We fast track growth for the industry with focus on high value biomanufacturing and bioprocessing infrastructure," he says, adding that it will partner with global MNCs to facilitate their expansion in Malaysia.

"We not only develop and manage infrastructure and space but also provide value-added services, which include shared utilities, such as ICT network, security, park management and R&D facilities. We also manage the process equipment, either through direct purchase or lease arrangements. Our breadth and depth of services will facilitate foreign and local companies," he says, elaborating on the function of BioXcell. Mr Ramli in an interview with BioSpectrum spoke about how [Bio-XCell is looking to focus on partnerships for resource optimization](#).

The speed at which constructions are taking place at the site is proof of the global attention that Bio-XCell has received since its inception. India's billion dollar biotechnology company, Biocon, is setting up a biomanufacturing and R&D facility at the custom-built park. The insulin production facility should be operational by 2014 and its investment is worth \$158 million (RM500 million).

Another Indian firm, Strides Arcolab, is also entering the park through its subsidiary Agila Specialities. A manufacturer of sterile injectables, Agila plans to be operational at the park by late 2013. It is investing around \$25 million for the project at

BioXcell. Among other multinationals that are opening shop at the park are Metabolic Explorer from France, a green chemistry company that develops fermentation-based industrial processes.

Metabolic Explorer's planned facility valued at \$31 million (RM100 million) will produce Propanediol from crude glycerine. US firm, GlycosBio, will also house a facility here that is expected to be operational by the end of 2012. At an investment of approximately \$24 million (RM78 million) in phase I, it will use its proprietary technology to produce technical grade ethanol using crude glycerine.

With significantly lower costs than what Singapore offers to companies, Malaysia is hoping that BioXcell will give the country an edge over its neighbor in terms of attracting biomanufacturing activities. The park, which will be a plug-and-play facility, has been established largely with biopharma production in mind. "The idea is to help the companies achieve operational efficiency, enable market partnership and accelerate go-to-market designs. It enhances production scale and provides cleaner environment to operate," says Mr Ramli about the park.

The Bio-XCell project, a 161-acre biotechnology park, will be developed in three phases over a span of six years. Leveraging on a public-private partnership to accelerate the development of a biotechnology ecosystem in Malaysia, it will provide an estimated 1.125 million square feet of dedicated, purpose-built space and facilities for biotechnology companies. The park will have standard shell-floor space for clients to rent and fit out according to their needs; CUF, a central utilities complex providing all facilities for biomanufacturing such as steam, cold water and industrial waste management; and a central hub, which will be a multipurpose complex for office operations.

Mr Ramli says inquiries are pouring in from different parts of the world. Argentina and Korea are among the nations that have shown interest in Malaysia. "They have a particular interest in investing in Bio-XCell. The land is full of resources, manpower and provides long-term sustainability. Companies look at certain elements that Bio-XCell is able to provide in abundance, such as proximity to the port, excellent roads and easy transportation that reduces delivery time significantly," he says.

Malaysia, which is implementing phase II of its National Biotechnology Policy, is leveraging on the park to achieve its objectives of bringing science closer to business. With a lot of infrastructure development already taking place at BioXcell, both Mr Ramli and the country are hopeful that Nusajaya will be a biotechnology hub and prosper with more investments pouring in.