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Country must bring back its talents, says Najib

KUALA LUMPUR: The country must bring back its talents and provide incentives to keep them home if it plans to have an innovation-led economy where its primary driver is based on science, technology and innovation (STI), said the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

He said in order to achieve this, the country needs to develop high calibre STI human capital and make it a priority in mainstream economic planning.

"We need more scientists and researchers. We need more innovators.

"We need pioneers in science and technology," he said in his speech at the Mahathir Science Award 2008 and 2009 at the Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) last night.

He said the country must identify reasons for its inability to nurture a bigger number of science professionals and if it is a brain drain, it must find ways of reversing it.

Present during the award presentation were his wife Datin Seri Rosmah Mansor, Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Dr Maximus Johnity Ongkili and Academy of Sciences Malaysia president Tan Sri Dr Yusof Basiron.

The Mahathir Science Award 2008 awarded by Academy of Sciences Malaysia, was bestowed on Prof Dr Gurdev Singh Khush for his contribution to tropical agriculture in developing several new rice varieties which helped in reducing global hunger.

The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) was conferred the Mahathir Science Award 2009, in the category of Tropical Natural Resources for its role in the development of the rubberwood furniture industry in Malaysia and globally.