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Promoting local herbal industry to global market

SEREMBAN: The Sixth Herbal Asia 2009 event to be held in Kuala Lumpur from April 30 to May 3 will help promote the Malaysian herbal industry to the global market.

Herbal Asia founder and chief executive officer Safinah Yaakob said the industry will leverage on government initiatives like the National Biodiversity Policy and Third National Agriculture Policy to create a brand which is recognised internationally.

"Realising the untapped opportunities of Malaysian herbs, Herbal Asia was organised for the first time in 2004 to provide a global platform in which entrepreneurs, producers, manufacturers and researchers can network, share their knowledge, create awareness and explore business opportunities," Safinah told reporters here yesterday.

"We want to create awareness and educate the public that Malaysian herbs are of superior quality and suitable for the local market. Why consume herbs from other countries such as China, India and Indonesia when Malaysia has over 2,000 plants that possess medicinal value? God gave us these wonderful resources and we should utilise them properly," she said.

The event, recognised as Asia's premier herbal trade show, will be held at the Matrade Exhibition and Convention Centre.

In conjunction with the event, a campaign will be launched to promote the use of Malaysian herbs, Safinah said.

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Safinah Yaakob, Herbal Asia founder and chief executive officer

The campaign, she said, will also aimed to reduce the need to import herbs by educating the public that the quality of local herbs is equal to or better than imported products, and encourage local entrepreneurs, especially Bumiputeras, to expand the herbal industry.

Herbal Asia 2009 will showcase a diverse offering of herbal-based and alternative medicine and health products, medical and diagnostic machinery, including branding and packaging, health lifestyle offerings and services, raw and semi-finished herbal constituents and extracts, beauty and personal care products, as well as information materials on biotechnology and herbal research.

"Visitors will have the opportunity to view how herbal products in Malaysia evolved, starting from the supply of raw materials to the finished products," Safinah said.

"Herbal Asia 2009 will continue to promote natural and herbal-based products, taking advantage of the current trend of the usage of these products in complementary and alternative medicine to

improve general health and combat illness," she said.

Local herbs which are increasingly making a mark these days include kacip fatimah (*labisia pumila*), pegaga (*centella asiatica*), peria (bitter gourd), misai kucing (cat whiskers), mas cotek (mistletoe fig), limau purut (kaffir lime) and jambu (guava), she added.

In line with this year's theme of 'Herbal Tourism: The Growing Industry', Herbal Asia 2009 will encourage existing and potential industry players to explore ways to merge various herbal cosmetics, healthcare and services, biotechnology, food and natural medicine into a single tourism product.

Safinah said besides assisting in direct herbal activities, the event will nurture a new market segment and give special focus to home spas, herbal clinics and honeymoon packages, and pre- and post-natal care.

Herbal Asia 2009 is expected to attract 200 exhibitors and more than 30,000 visitors compared to last year's 150 exhibitors and 25,000 visitors.

The event is jointly organised by Gitex (M) Sdn Bhd together with the Forest Research Institute Malaysia, in collaboration with the Federal Agricultural Marketing Authority (Fama), Majlis Amanah Rakyat (Mara) and Gagasan Badan Ekonomi Melayu (Gabem).

For registration and more details on the event, visit the website www.herbalasia.com.my or call Tel: 03-62803506. — Bernama