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KPD to play leading role in herbal industry

KOTA KINABALU: The Rural Development Co-Operative (KPD), one of the government agencies entrusted with implementing projects to help rural folk, proposes to venture into the herbal industry to diversify its socio-economic activities, says General Manager Datu Basrun Datu Mansor.

He says the cooperative intends to capitalise on Sabah's forests which are rich in flora with high medicinal properties.

As an initial move, a delegation from the Board of Directors of the KPD led by its chairman Haji Ahmad Bujang recently visited several government agencies in Peninsular Malaysia which were involved in research and production of herbal-based products.

He said the KPD was keen to establish working relations with government agencies like the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) and Malaysian Agricultural Research and Development Institute (Mardi) as they are the two agencies directly involved in developing the herbal industry in the country.

"During the visit, we were told that the forests in Sabah were blessed with flora that can be tapped to produce herbs, but this has not been explored to the fullest," he said.

So far, no government agency or private organisation was fully engaged in the herbal industry on a commercial scale in Sabah, said Basrun.

He said the move to rope in the KPD in the herbal industry was in line with the state government's plan that the cooperative play the lead role in realising the full potential of the herbal industry in the state.

He said the KPD welcomed the state government's plan as it was in line with the cooperative's inception while the herbal industry was closely associated with the livelihood of the rural folk in the state.

Following the visit to Peninsular Malaysia, Basrun said, the KPD has asked MARDI to upgrade its roles and functions in Sabah, particularly with regard to research work and identifying flora with medicinal values in Sabah.

According to the National Strategy Report on Plant Conservation, Malaysia is blessed with about 15,000 flora species and of the total, some 12,000 species are found

in Sabah and Sarawak.

Basrun said the KPD's long-term plan was to establish a commercial herbal extraction technology and to set up companies related to the industry with good manufacturing and processing standards in Sabah.

Besides FRIM and Mardi, the delegation also visited Sirim Bhd, Nasuha Spices and Herbs Paradise in Muar and Malaysian Herbal Corporation in Medan Tuanku, Kuala Lumpur. - Bernama