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# Key policies, strategies to manage plantations

FIVE key policies and strategies have been used to manage the plantation and commodities sectors.

They are the:

- > Five Year Malaysia Plan (9th and 10th Malaysia Plan);
- > National Agriculture Policy Three (NAP 3);
- > Third Industrial Master Plan 2009-2020 (IMP 3);
- > National Timber Industry Policy 2009-2020 (NATIP); and
- > National Biofuel Policy

Currently, the Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities (MPIC) is developing the National Commodities Policy to ensure the competitiveness and sustainability of the industry, while at the same time to increase its contribution to national economy and well-being/livelihood of the global community.

"I believe there are plenty of opportunities and potential that can be explored and benefited from the plantation and commodities sectors.

"Years of research and development have revealed that palm trees have more to offer," minister Tan Sri Bernard Dompok said recently.

Among the areas looked at, among others, are biomass, which can be utilised either as feedstock for fine chemicals, material for bio-fertiliser, material for wood-based industry and second generation bio-fuel.

Waste from palm oil mills can be turned into bio-fertiliser and phytonutrients while functional foods, bio-

technological products, polyol and polyurethane are also side palm oil products.

While the initiative to rapidly boost the local palm oil industry, Bernard said Malaysia has committed itself as a signatory to many international conventions, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora.

"Malaysia is fully committed towards sustainable forest management (SFM) in the overall context of sustainable development," he said.

Malaysia is also a member country of the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO). Malaysia is also committed and subscribes to the ITTO Year 2000 Objective in ensuring that the exports of timber and timber products are sourced from sustainably managed forests.

"Among the efforts taken by Malaysia towards achieving SFM include the revision of the National Forestry Policy (NFP) in 1992 to take into account the importance of biological diversity conservation and the sustainable utilization of forest genetic resources, as well as the role of local communities in forest development," he also said.

In tandem with the revised NFP, the National Forestry Act 1984 was revised in 1993 to include more stringent rules and penalties for for-

estry offences, such as illegal encroachment of forest areas and timber theft.

Malaysia has also shown progress in research, cultivation and usage of local herbal plants for medicinal purposes.

Currently, research is being undertaken to assess the medicinal properties of among others andrographis paniculata (hempedu bumi), centetta asiatica (pegaga), eurycoma longi-

folia (tongkat ali), labisia spp (kacip fatimah) and orthosipon stamineus (misai kucing).

To facilitate development of herbal plants for medicinal purposes, the Herbal Medicine Research Centre under the Institute of Medical Research was established in 2001 to conduct research activities which involve among others pre-clinical evaluation of herbal extracts, safety and efficacy evaluation and identification of active constituents.

A number of research institutions/universities are also active in undertaking activities on the suitability of medicinal plants in the country.

These include Forest Research Institute of Malaysia, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Universiti Malaya, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Malaysia Sabah and Malaysian Agriculture Research Institute.



**Fruits of labour:** A worker collecting oil palm fruit at a plantation in Sepang outside Kuala Lumpur last month. — Reuters