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India, Malaysia to cooperate in research into natural herbs

SHAH ALAM: India is willing to cooperate with Malaysia to explore and tap the potentials of natural herbs in the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM).

Malaysian Society For Complementary Medicine President Dr Lee Chee Peng, said that for a start, he had invited National Institute of Unani Medicine (NIUM) in Bangalore, India to undertake research into natural herbs, which has the potential of becoming traditional medicine, at the institute.

"FRIM has many natural herbs and India can do a lot of research at the institute to explore the potentials of natural herbs in becoming traditional medicine. India is noted for its traditional herbs and has the

necessary skills and expertise to undertake research.

"Although many people use traditional medicine in Malaysia, it is not fully exploited especially in research and development," he told Bernama.

Dr Lee said he had extended the invitation to NIUM when he attended as a guest at the 4th World Ayurveda Congress and Arogya Expo held in Bangalore, India, recently.

He was leading a nine-member team from his society to the four-day Ayurveda congress, which ended on Monday.

The event is believed to be the world's largest fair for complementary and alternative healthcare, and

attracted hundreds of thousands of visitors and delegates.

Dr Lee said that India had about 9,000 natural herbs, out of which only 300 were exported to Malaysia.

He said that there was now a strong demand for instant traditional medicine in Malaysia as about 70 percent of Malaysians used traditional and complementary medicine based on a survey by the Health Ministry in 2004.

Dr Lee, who is chairman of International, Scientific and Research Council for Complementary Medicine, said that he is working very hard to set up a head office of the council in Malaysia soon. - Bernama