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FRIM eyes tie-up in biotech research with African countries

KUALA LUMPUR: After having established links with Nigeria in joint research and forest development, and possibly soon with Gabon, the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (Frim) has set its sights to extend similar collaboration in biotechnology to other African countries.

Frim director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod said the linkage would facilitate the transfer of technology to Africa and in the process, enable them to exploit natural bio-resources in their countries.

The technology transfer would go a long way in creating a biotechnology industry and a market for forestry-based products from Africa, he said.

African countries were rich in natural resources but they lacked in research and development (R&D) and technology development, Abdul Latif told Bernama after a presentation, 'Roles of FRIM In Nurturing Biotechnology thorough R&D', to the Langkawi International Dialogue 2011 (LID2011) delegates who visited Frim here Monday.

Frim had set foot in Africa through collaboration, also referred as twin campus with the Forest Research Institute Nigeria and expects to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Gabon by September, for R&D of herbal products and forestry development.

"We want to twin with African countries to share the idea of R&D, including raw materials, safety and efficient processing technology, safety and efficacious of products from rural areas, branding of products, as well as sharing of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR).

"The first outcome of such collaboration would be seen in a three-year period," said Abdul Latif.

This is in line with Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak's call for an innovation economy going forward at LID2011, as well as lift the biotechnology industry.

There was vast potential in the African market, said Abdul Latif, adding that in the next 10 years, Africa's value of natural products in bio-technology would be not less than RM50 billion. - Bernama