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Ongkili suggests National Repository Centre

KUALA LUMPUR: Science, Technology and Innovation Minister Datuk Seri Dr Maximus Johnity Ongkili has suggested setting up a National Repository Centre for the storage of specimens for either genetic material or Malaysian herbal and plants.

He said there were many local agencies, including institutions of higher learning, which collect specimen in a tested dry form.

"Therefore, what we have in mind, is to establish a national centre that is inter-linked with them, so that they can contribute samples collected to it.

"We can also help them produce specimen or samples in liquid form, so that other researchers can easily utilise it," he told reporters after launching the BioNexus Partners (BNP) Centre of Excellence, here, Tuesday.

Citing Australia as an example, Ongkili said the repository there has a lot of samples in liquid form, and all researchers are encouraged to donate whatever specimens they have to it.

"They also get access to the specimens already in the repository.

tory.

"We have been talked about this and hopefully before the Tenth Malaysia Plan is over, we can see the repository materialise, as the samples are available. It just that we have to put it all together," he added.

Meanwhile, asked about the brain drain issue among scientists, Ongkili said it was not easy to hold back people, as salary scales must be attractive.

"Sometimes, we just cannot match what businesses pay. In the context of scientists, what we discovered is that, it is not practical to hold them back but undertake joint collaborations in research.

Meanwhile, the BNP Centre of Excellence under the Malaysian Biotechnology Corporation and the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), will be the referral and one-stop centre for the industry to develop herbal products.

The centre consists of six BNP laboratories and units specialising in the development of herbal products.

At the same event, several collaborations and agreements were also announced and memoranda of understanding exchanged between FRIM and six local biotech companies.

The companies are I&R Herbal Industries Sdn Bhd, Celltis Sdn Bhd, IOI Palm Biotech Sdn Bhd, Borneo Biogaharu Sdn Bhd, Furley Bioextracts Sdn Bhd and Herbagus Sdn Bhd.—Bernama