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6,000 species of herbs could propel Malaysia to high income status

KUALA LUMPUR: There are about 6,000 species of herbs in Malaysia that can be developed and used as beauty and food supplement products.

Forestry Research Institute of Malaysia Director General Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod said the FRIM had studied more than 20 species of medicinal and aromatic plants from which beauty care and fragrance products could be developed.

"With the latest technology, it is not impossible for us to unlock the vast potential in our rain forest to propel Malaysia to high income status," he told *Bernama*.

Among the popular herbs being researched are *lemboyang*,

tumeric, kaffir lime, kemoyang, serai wangi, selasih, jangkang and gaharu, he added.

Abdul Latif said the FRIM had found that the extracts or chemical compounds from the species analysed had anti-oxidant, anti-inflammatory, anti-microbial and biopesticide properties.

Based on the research findings, he said, the FRIM is testing whether the essential oils and extracts of the herbs could be developed as cosmetic and wellness products in capsule, tablet or tea form.

Abdul Latif said the FRIM had established a herbal technology centre with good manufacturing practice certification to help the health care industries to realise

the commercial value of local herbal products.

The research programme is in line with the aspiration of the government to entrench the herbal and health care industry in the country as outlined in the National Agricultural Policy and the National Biotechnology Policy, he said.

He noted that more than 30 new herbal products had been manufactured and were now being commercialised in cooperation with pharmaceutical companies.

Illustrating the potential of the herbal industry, he said that *gaharu* essence is in high demand and that even a small quantity could fetch thousands of *ringgit*. - *Bernama*