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# 'Tap potential of forest produce remedies'

**KUALA LUMPUR:** It is high time the country explored forest produce in search of remedies for diseases, said Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod.

"The country can benefit from minor forest produce such as herbs and discovery of new drugs," he told the *New Straits Times* yesterday after launching the international symposium on costs and benefit of "REDD Plus: What, Who, How and When".

The two-day symposium was attended by researchers, scientists, experts, policy makers and representatives from non-governmental organisations.

Organised jointly with the Japanese government, the symposium is reflective of FRIM's effort to take climate change, research and development seriously.

The symposium also saw the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between FRIM, who represented the Malaysian Forestry Research and Development Board and Japan's Hiroshima University.

Latif said the memorandum marked the beginning of collaborated research activities on biotechnology, climate change, research and

development of new medically beneficial forest produce and patterns creation.

"Many communicable diseases such as dengue are related to climate change and we hope to collaborate with local and international researchers to bring down the statistics as well as create remedies."

He said reducing greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and degradation, particularly in developed countries, was also important as they caused a major impact to climate change.

"Forests play a key role in climate change. It contributes positively through carbon sequestration and preservation of carbon stocks when they are well conserved and managed.

"But they (forests) contribute negatively when they are not managed."

He said with such collaborations, the country would slowly embark actively in conserving and managing forest resources on a sustainable basis.

"It is, therefore, important to discuss cost, benefits and financial incentives to developing countries and offer benefits for protection of indigenous people by improving their livelihood."