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DR BULUH SMACKS HIS LIPS

Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod cannot wait for the pandas to arrive. After all, he is the bamboo expert. >4



Bamboo doc can't wait to feed giant pandas

The plantation alone can supply food for the pandas for about three years.

— DATUK DR ABD LATIF MOHMOD

By LIM WEY WEN
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KUALA LUMPUR: When Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod initiated a project to plant 20ha of bamboo in Raub 15 years ago, he never thought that it will benefit giant pandas from China.

His love for the plant was evident when he said the arrival of two pandas from China would allow the humble plant to shine again.

"For a long time, I had wished that there would be pandas in Malaysia. The base of the plant can be used as 'dessert' for the pandas, while its top end can be utilised for commercial products such as chopsticks," the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) director-general said during a tour of the institute's bamboo garden here yesterday.

China has agreed to loan two pandas to Malaysia for 10 years in recognition of the good bilateral ties and in conjunction with the countries' 40th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

Dr Latif, 51, and his officers initiated the Raub project as part of the



Coming soon: A keeper feeding a panda named Fengyi at the Guilin Zoo in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. Fengyi and another panda named Fuwa will be loaned to Malaysia. — Xinhua

National Pilot Project on Bamboo to develop the bamboo-growing industry.

Also called *Dr Buluh* (Bamboo doctor) by his peers, he had won many awards for his 20-year research on bamboo and the development of the bamboo industry.

"The bamboo is actually grass, not a tree. It matures quickly within two to three years and it is a renewable resource.



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He said the animals would cover over one kilometre a day and spend about 10 to 16 hours eating up to 30kg of bamboo.

Dr Latif said pandas would love the shoots from the locally-available Siamese bamboo while the hedge bamboo's leaves and stalks would be tasty snacks.

"When cut into chopstick-sized stalks, the *buluh betung* and *buluh beting* will make a good dessert for

the pandas," he said, adding that pandas love to play in a type of bamboo called Buddha's belly bamboo or bottle bamboo bushes.

He said the supply of bamboo for the pandas would come from bamboo planted in 15ha in Putrajaya Wetlands and Paya Indah Wetlands as well as the plantation in Raub.

"The plantation alone can supply food for the pandas for about three years," he said.