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# 4 plants of medicinal value found

FRIM working on the prototype before engaging partner to commercialise them, says deputy D-G  
It is a new discovery with properties for general health and diabetes.

Dr Norini Haron, FRIM deputy director-general

**Lim How Pim**

**KUCHING:** Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) is working on the prototype of four medicinal plants with the aim of eventually commercialising them as they are deemed good for general health and diabetes.

Its deputy director-general Dr Norini Haron said no research and development (R&D) work had been carried out on these species before.

"It is a new discovery with properties for general health and diabetes.

"The prototypes will be completed this year, after which we will look for a partner to commercialise it," she told a news conference after opening the National Conservation

Symposium 2013 entitled 'Melestari Khazanah Warisan Negara' here yesterday.

However, Norini kept the names of the four plants under wraps in order to protect the traditional-knowledge rights of the Orang Asli in Semelai, Sungai Bera, Pahang.

She was only prepared to divulge that one of the medicinal plants is a "big tree".

"It's a big tree. Its bark, leaves and root have been tested. It's not a fruit tree, but a wild species."

To date, FRIM has documented the use of medicinal plants to treat diseases by 11 of the 18 sub-ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia.

FRIM's target for this year is to document the traditional knowledge of two more groups and cover two more sub-ethnic groups next year.

"By next year we will have documentation of the traditional knowledge of 15 sub-ethnic groups.

"The remaining three have no traditional knowledge or do not use medicinal plants or forest resources to cure common diseases."

The research project, carried out under the Ninth Malaysia Plan, is undertaken by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment.

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## 'We look at the legal aspects of sharing traditional knowledge'

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"The project is implemented by FRIM and we work together with the Orang Asli in Peninsular Malaysia.

"We look at the legal aspects of sharing traditional knowledge to make sure it goes back to the Orang Asli community.

"We obtained consent from the Orang Asli prior to documenting

the species. We do not force them to document the medicinal plants."

Norini revealed that the Ministry for Agriculture and Agro-based Industry was also looking to document the traditional knowledge of the Malays.

"Medicinal plants have big scope for research and

we are only scratching the surface."

As for Sarawak and Sabah, she said both states do their own research on traditional knowledge and medicinal species.

"Our focus is on Peninsular Malaysia although we would like to work with anybody."

Established in 1929, FRIM is a leading institution in tropical

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forest research in the world. More than 60 individuals are participating in the four-day symposium. They are from organisations such as

Sarawak Economic Development Corporation, Sarawak Cultural Village, Kuching North City Commission, Sarawak Forestry

Corporation, Sarawak Forest Department, Tourism Malaysia Sarawak, Sarawak Tourism Board, and Universiti Malaysia Sarawak (Unimas).



THANKYOU: Norini presents a memento to Kuching North City Commission Datuk Bandar Datuk Abang Abdul Wahap Abang Julai.



ATTENTIVE: Participants of National Conservation Symposium 2013 listen to Norini's opening remarks.