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Ministry to review timber R&D laws

By **Jeremy Veno**
reporters@theborneopost.com

KUCHING: The Natural Resources and Environment Ministry will revisit the current laws pertaining to research and development (R&D) of timber resources in Malaysia.

Minister Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar said the laws, which were enacted in the 80s, had too much red tape that hindered business-sharing between government agencies and researchers.

"We will study the laws and make them more dynamic, given that there have been lots of discoveries (on new species) but no step has been taken to commercialise them," he said during a press conference at Santubong Service Centre.

According to Wan Junaidi, who is Santubong MP, the ministry is studying five to six laws relating to timber industry R&D - some of which are directly linked with its statutory body, the **Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM)** that is tasked with promoting sustainable management and optimal use of forest resources in the country.

The revised laws, he said, would also enable researchers who made any specific discovery to share it with industry players who in turn, could capitalise on such find and make it marketable.

Eventually the industry, Wan Junaidi added, would further provide incentives to the researchers which could act to enhance their R&D, or enable them to open up their own research companies.

The minister also highlighted another proposal to the state government, which was the setup of a research centre in Sarawak dedicated to the studying of the Acacia wood species.

"Currently, Acacia trees grow on more than 2,000 hectares of land across the state. This is a promising species that could generate good income to the timber industry," he said, adding that the centre would include R&D on Acacia across the whole of Asean.

On another matter, Wan Junaidi hoped that the tabling of National Budget 2016 would give more focus on rural development.

He said apart from providing allocations for the improvement on basic facilities in the rural areas such as roads as well as water and electricity supply, more emphasis should also be given on providing a platform for those running small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and small and medium industries (SMIs), which would allow them to grow.

"I also hope that the government would not only focus on the rural cottage industry, but also on SMEs and SMIs, of which products are marketable outside the villages," he added.

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Datuk Seri Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, Minister of Natural Resources and Environment



Wan Junaidi (seated centre), flanked by his wife Datin Seri Feonia Abdullah and Pemanca Rahsidi Junai, joins a photo session at the Santubong Service Centre in Kuching.