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## New law to see M'sian herbs spread across globe

**PETALING JAYA:** A new law allows for some 500 forest-based health products to be commercialised.

The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Act, which allows patented forest products and R&D to be sold and gives consumers worldwide access to Malaysian pharmacopeia, came into force yesterday.

It also allows FRIM to sell its patents and market its R&D, test and certify forest products.

"The institute is targeting international pharmaceutical companies," FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod said.

Over 1,000 specimens have been studied and about half of the powdered extracts can be used in pharmaceutical and health products, he added. To date, FRIM has registered 124 patents, 18 of which have already been granted.

"Before the Act, we could only get a patent, wait for people to come to us, and charge a little bit of royalty.

"Now we can do business and even penetrate the global market.

"So whoever makes a discovery will be fairly compensated," he said, adding that the Act would allow FRIM to reduce its reliance on the Government.

During the debate, there were concerns about a conflict of interest between environmental protection and commercialisation but there were no objections to the Bill.