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Cuba willing to share expertise on aquaculture

KUALA LUMPUR, Mon - Malaysia will seek Cuba's co-operation to upgrade aquaculture farming here, Agriculture Minister Datuk Dr Sulaiman Daud said today.

He said Cuba had vast experience in aquaculture farming and had agreed to assist Malaysia by training agriculture officers in Cuba, sending their experts here and providing information.

Dr Sulaiman was speaking after meeting Cuba's Fisheries Minister Orlando Felipe Rodgroguez Romay at his office at Wisma Tani here.

"When Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad went to Cuba, he saw their aquaculture was rather well-developed," Dr Sulaiman said, adding that Romay's visit was a follow-up of the Prime Minister's visit.

Dr Mahathir visited Cuba in September last year, the first by a Malaysian head of Government to the Caribbean Island.

Dr Sulaiman said the Cubans put much emphasis on rearing tilapia in large numbers and they could get yields as high as 26 tonnes per hectare.

He said Cuba exported large quantities of fresh-water fish and lobsters to Canada, Europe and Japan. Romay had also told him his country conducted intensive and "super-intensive" research in aquaculture.

"We are interested in aquaculture as we want to improve it here and also look for alternative sources of fish. In Peninsular Malaysia, there are about 45,000 hectares of water bodies like lakes and mining pools to do that," he said.

Dr Sulaiman added fish could be also be used as a cheaper source of protein supply for chicken feed.

On rearing cattle in plantations, he said the response had not been encouraging and he had sought the assistance of the Primary Industries Ministry, which had close contacts with plantations, on the matter.

"If they do not want to do it themselves, the plantations could lease their land to those interested," he said.

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