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Bio-diversity valley to be developed to promote research in bio-technology

A BIO-DIVERSITY valley will be established to enhance research works especially in bio-technology.

Science, Technology and Environment Deputy Minister Datuk Zainal Dahalan said the facility would also help protect research and studies by Malaysians from being transferred to other countries.

Replying to points raised by MPs debating his ministry's allocation for next year, he said the project was necessary as Malaysia, one of 12 countries rich in bio-diversity, did not possess the capability to fully protect them.

He said, however, the site for the valley, a project earmarked under the Eighth Malaysia Plan, had not been decided yet.

Zainal said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad would chair the committee set up to oversee the establishment of the valley.

Datuk Ruhanie Ahmad (BN-Parit Sulong) had asked on measures to be carried out in harnessing and exploiting the bio-technology field.

He expressed concern that if Malaysians were not careful, they could suffer a similar fate as producers of the basmati faizah rice. Although it originated from the Himalayas, the patent is held by a company based in Arizona, the United States.

Earlier, Datuk Ahmad Husni Hanadzlah (BN-Tambun) spoke on the programme to bring back Malaysian-born scientists working overseas, saying the Government must be clear in its objective.

He said their expertise should be utilised to promote and develop science and technology.

Husni said Malaysia should emulate India and China, which made rapid progress in the fields of information technology and bio-technology respectively with the help of their overseas-based scientists.

"We must be serious. Identify and bring them back home. Provide them with the funds and facilities."

Madius Tangau (BN-Tuaran) wanted developers to give more attention to environment impact assessment and not wait until development plans were completed.