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UPM-Cuba

UPM USES CUBAN TECHNOLOGY TO PRODUCE HUMAN VACCINE

SERDANG, Dec 18 (Bernama) -- Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM), known for its agricultural expertise, has now gone a step further -- to produce human vaccine.

The programme's leader, Dr Mohamed Azmi Mohamed Lila, said that the vaccine project was a joint collaboration between the university's Institute of Bio-Science and Cuba's Centre for Genetic Engineering.

"The vaccine can be used to cure existing common infectious diseases. We are using Cuban technology to jump-start this project and it is a fast-track method, otherwise it will take at least seven years to produce the vaccine," Dr Mohamed Azmi, who is also UPM's Laboratory Immunotherapeutic and Vaccine Department head, told reporters at his office here today.

Working around with a budget of more than RM50 million, funded by UPM, a local pharmaceutical company and the government, he said that local scientists would try to improve the existing vaccine and make it cheaper in the market.

He said the university took a year to build the necessary infrastructure for developing the vaccine and the project was expected to be completed in about five years.

"If this is successful, UPM will be in the frontier in the field of bio-technology in Malaysia and become a world class university by 2010," he said but declined to name the vaccine the scientists were working on.

He said that a team of Malaysians would be leaving for Cuba on Sunday for a week to sign additional contracts that would include transfer of technology, training and exchange of expertise between both countries.

This project is a spin-off after former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad visited Cuba, he added.

-- BERNAMA

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