

# Rafidah: Herbal venture with China possible

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## Pooling efforts can benefit both sides

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**BEIJING:** Malaysia's ginseng is the *Tongkat Ali*, said International Trade and Industry Minister Datuk Seri Rafidah Aziz.

"We have our own 'ginseng', too. We call it *Tongkat Ali*," she told some 700 participants at a seminar on Malaysia-China Business Opportunities at a hotel here.

Rafidah was responding yesterday to a question on how to export ginseng products to Malaysia and what rare medicinal plants were found in the country.

"Ali is a man. *Tongkat* is a cane. This Ali's cane can help him walk," quipped Rafidah.

She said that any medicinal product must first obtain a permit from the Health Ministry and adhere to the safety guidelines before being given the green light from her ministry to export it to Malaysia.

Earlier in her speech, she said China, traditionally known for its strength in alternative medicine, could develop this field through the use of biotechnology.

"Malaysia's biotechnology companies can collaborate with the research centres in China which specialise in the development of agricultural and herb-based medicines," she said.

Both Malaysia and China could combine their strengths, vast resources and technical expertise for mutual benefit, she added.

Rafidah also promoted Malaysia as a honeymoon destination to Chinese couples while calling on those who qualified for the *Malaysia My Second Home* programme to visit Malaysia.

She said she was overwhelmed by the response in Shanghai and hoped the level of interest on Malaysia would be as high in

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DATUK SERI RAFIDAH AZIZ

Beijing and Guangzhou.

The minister is leading a delegation comprising 21 Malaysian companies and government agencies on a week-long trade and investment mission to China.

The delegation visited Shanghai last Friday before coming to the Chinese capital and will proceed to Guangzhou today.

The minister also witnessed the signing ceremony of business ventures between iTopia Services Sdn Bhd and SuiFenHe Municipal People's Government of China, and between Nelson's Franchise (M) Sdn Bhd and Beijing Nesco Trade Co Ltd.

Bilateral trade between Malaysia and China totalled US\$27.5bil (RM93.2bil) last year, an increase of 22.4% compared with US\$22.5bil (RM76.2bil) in 2005.

China is Malaysia's fourth largest trading partner for six consecutive years.