

Parliament: Biotechnology Institute To Be Set Up To Spur Herbal Industry
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KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 8 (Bernama) -- A national institute of biotechnology will be set up next year to expand the herbal market internationally, the Dewan Rakyat was told today.

The institute would merge the Malaysian Pharmaceutical and Nutraceutical Institute (Ipharm), Malaysian Genome Institute and Malaysian Agrobiotechnology Institute.

Science, Technology and Innovation Deputy Minister Datuk Fadillah Yusof said the merger would conduct herb-related research and development (R&D) projects.

He said the endeavour would join ministries and agencies, including the health ministry in pharmaceutical, and the agriculture and agro-based industries ministry in outstream activities.

"Besides that, the higher education ministry will produce human capital which are experts in various fields of medicine," he said during the question-and-answer session in Parliament here today.

He was replying to an additional question from Hamim Samuri (BN-Ledang) who had asked about the ministry's efforts to expand the herbal industry globally to derive substantial economic output for the country.

Fadillah said the soon-to-be set up biotechnology institute would not only provide basic infrastructure for the R&D but would also explore other supporting fields for expansion.

Currently, he said, the herbal industry was only contributing to the nutraceutical field, in terms of aesthetics and as food supplement, and had not reached the pharmaceutical stage.

Earlier, replying to a question by Hamim on the progress of the herbal industry and its potential to contribute to the health of the people, Fadillah said Ipharm was set up to develop herbs as medicine through phases of clinical studies.

He said, 10 companies had been given the Bionexus status by the BiotechCorp as at Oct 31, with investments totaling RM237,960,163.

Out of this, the companies had generated RM55,407,792 and in the process, created 206 employment opportunities, he added.

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