

Don: Rare fruits fast vanishing

STORY AND PICTURE BY CHRISTINA KOH

IPOH: A brinjal nicknamed Nipplefruit? A citron fruit that resembles the hand of the Buddha?

These are among the many rare fruits in the country that are gradually depleting in the wild, said Associate Professor Adirukmi Achmad Azis of the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI).

She bemoaned that many of the country's rare fruits were disappearing due to heavy development or simply because the fruits were thought to have limited commercial value.

"Some people prefer to clear away these trees from their land in favour of planting cash crops. But it is important to save them and preserve their genetic properties.

"Who knows? One of these fruits might even contain an antioxidant component or hold the cure for cancer," she said in an interview here after submitting two related papers at the two-day National Biology Conference 2003 which ended here on Monday.

The brinjal species (*Solanum mammosum*), which is also known by its local name *terung tetek kambing* because the yellow fruit resembles the udders of a goat or cow, is one of the



EXOTIC FRUITS: Adirukmi holding up two rare fruits - *terung tetek kambing* (right) and *limau jari*. These are among the many rare fruits in the country that are gradually depleting in the wild.

fruits disappearing from the wild.

Another odd fruit is the *limau jari* (*Citrus medica* var *sarcodactylis*) which is sometimes called 'Buddha's Hand' because the fruit reminds people of outstretched fingers.

Adirukmi, who lectures on plant biology at UPSI in Tanjung Malim, said the Chinese sometimes used the *limau jari* as offering in temples.

In Sabah, there is a type of durian that looks normal on the outside but the flesh is as red as lipstick.

"It even tastes like lipstick! It does not make good eating," she said.

Adirukmi's interest in rare fruits started in 1980 when she began travelling and gathering data about unusual specimens in remote places through her students.

She said it was her hope that students keep a lookout for rare plants in their own neighbourhood so that the species could be preserved and propagated.

She plans to publish a book, tentatively titled 'The Rare and Exotic Fruits of Malaysia' early

next year.

The book, the result of 25 years of research, will feature over 100 rare but edible fruit species, such as *pisang ribu*, *durian belanda* (soursop) and *buah pala* (nutmeg).

She also plans to compile a book on Malaysian fragrant flowers and vegetables in the future.

The conference, organised by UPSI, saw participants and speakers from the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), schools and universities from all over the country.

Officers not cowed by illegal VCD peddlers

BY R.S.N. MURALI

SEREMBAN: Enforcement officers of the state Domestic Trade and Consumer Affairs Department, furious over threatening cellphone calls by illegal VCD peddlers, will intensify efforts to nab them.

The latest threats were received on Tuesday night after a 19-year-old peddler was held for distributing pirated VCDs in Taman Tuanku Jaffar.

Department director Mohd Aris Ariffin said his officers were not intimidated by the threats and were working on identifying the callers, believed to be members of a syndicate.

"The callers hurled abusive words and threats, demanding that our officers halt all operations or else their families would not be able to sleep peacefully at home," he said yesterday.

Mohd Aris said a police report has been lodged and his officers were zooming in on the possible connection of the callers to the detained teenager.

He said the teenager was charged at the magistrate's court yesterday.