

## **Genetic Resources being stolen from Indonesia**

The theft of genetic resources from Indonesia is becoming a major problem according to a report in The Jakarta Post of 2 Dec 2006. Indonesia claims to have more than 47 different ecosystems, 28,000 indigenous species of flora, and thousands of species of microorganism.

The Indonesian government, concerned over the looting of the country's biological resources and the ensuing loss of intellectual property rights, convened a workshop to discuss how to respond to the theft." Samples of some species have been illegally removed from the country for research purposes by foreign scientists, possibly concealed about their persons," the Forestry Ministry's secretary-general, Boen M. Purnama, said on the sidelines of the biodiversity conservation workshop. He also said "We need to protect and sustain our biodiversity. It could have vast potential that we don't know about yet,"

According to the Forestry Ministry in Indonesia, countries like the U.S., Russia and some European nations control 54 percent of the 3.9 million commercially viable genetic plant resources worldwide, while international research institutions control only 16 percent, with the rest being controlled by developing countries.

In order to protect and sustain the country's biodiversity, the Indonesian government is holding workshops, conducting research and promoting conservation, while fighting the illegal trade in genetic resources. A bill on the conservation and utilization of domestic genetic resources has been drafted with inputs from stakeholders like NGOs, academics, the Agriculture Ministry, the Forestry Ministry, the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the State Ministry of the Environment but it is still pending in the House of Representatives.