Jan 26, 2005 Wed

SINGAPORE

STI Home > Singapore > Story

Jan 26, 2005

'Recognise scientific value of nature in S'pore'

SINGAPORE'S nature areas are worth protecting not just for their recreational, heritage or educational value but also their scientific uses.

Issuing such advice in Parliament yesterday, Nominated MP Geh Min reminded the House of how a tree that may be the key to curb the Aids disease was found in Singapore's own Botanic Gardens.

In 1992, a researcher from the United States' National Cancer Institute (NCI) visited Singapore to see if the Calophyllum tree existed here. He had originally found a sample in Sarawak, but the site had been cleared when he went back again.

The species in the Botanic Gardens, the Calophyllum lanigerum, contains the Calanolide A compound which NCI researchers had earlier said has shown an ability to prevent full-blown Aids in someone who has the HIV virus.

The 'magic chemical' is now undergoing further testing for suitability for clinical use, Dr Geh told the House.

She said: 'Our nature areas have, after long neglect, come to be valued for their recreational, heritage and even educational functions, all of which are difficult to quantify.

'But their potential scientific and economic value is still not properly recognised.'
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