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IPOH: The RM78 million Belum Valley Biodiversity and Biotechnology Centre will be set up in a joint project involving the state government and Universiti Putra Malaysia.

It will consist of an "open laboratory" in the jungle and a research laboratory in Grik. It is part of the state's plans to document and exploit the rich natural resources of one of the world's oldest surviving pristine rainforests.

State secretary Datuk Dr Abdul Rahman Hashim and UPM vice-chancellor Datuk Dr Nik Mustapha R. Abdullah signed the Memorandum of Understanding yesterday in the presence of Perak Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Mohd Tajol Rosli Ghazali and secretary-general of the Higher Education Ministry Datuk Dr Zulkefli Hassan.