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A fun-filled day at FRIM

The elderly, students and children take part in green-themed activities

JADE CHAN

SENIOR citizen Low Chooi Suat had a great time during his trip to the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), which included a guided tour of its botanical garden.

"This is my first time at FRIM, and we took a short 15-minute walk to learn about various plants.

"Given the chance, I would like to come here again. I'd like to see the durian and rambutan trees in the forest!" said the 80-year-old.

Low was among those who gathered at FRIM for its World Forestry Day celebration themed *1Nature, 1Voice, 1Malaysia* yesterday.

University students, as well as children and senior citizens from Kompleks Penyayang Bakti Sungai Buloh took part in various green-themed activities.

The activities included a treasure hunt, drawing and colouring competition, a guided tour and performances with a green message.

This year's annual celebration was co-organised by FRIM, Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Shah Alam, and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar) Kampar.

The event's theme reflected its objective to instill love for nature and enhance appreciation of forests among Malaysians.

UiTM vice-chancellor Datuk Prof Dr Sahol Hamid Abu Bakar said he was planning to introduce various

green policies at all the 12 UiTM campuses nationwide soon.

"The Go Green Campus programme is aimed at creating awareness among our 140,000 students on the importance of the environment and related green issues," he said.

"We are researching on green roof and rainwater harvesting projects, which we plan to implement, alongside practices like turning kitchen waste into compost and not using polystyrene packaging at our cafeteria.

"There is already a high level of awareness among the students, but we want to take things step by step. There has to be awareness and understanding first, before anything is enforced."

Prof Sahol said there would be an education and awareness period between January till June, before policies and rules were implemented after that.

"World Forestry Day is an international event that is celebrated on March 21 every year. The date also marks the start of the March equinox (spring) in the Northern

Hemisphere," said FRIM deputy director-general (operations) Dr Abdul Rahim Nik.

"It takes 1ha of a forest to absorb three to five tonnes of carbon dioxide per year, which is why trees and

forests are more important than ever in carbon offsets and global warming reduction."

He also urged developers to reserve 10% of their properties as

green space not only for landscaping, but also for shady trees.

Dr Abdul Rahim highlighted that FRIM, which covered a 485.2ha site in Kepong, had been gazetted a natural heritage site under the National Heritage Act 2005 on Feb 10 last year.

"FRIM will be celebrating its 25th year this year, and we are planning a host of programmes based on the theme *Conserve, Innovate and Educate*," he said.

"We will be having a function sometime in June to recognise the gazettelement, and unveil a special book that details some 100 years of forestry, research and FRIM's historical development.

"On March 25, we will also be launching the FRIM Research Gallery. It features exhibits about the biodiversity, forestry and research activities at FRIM."

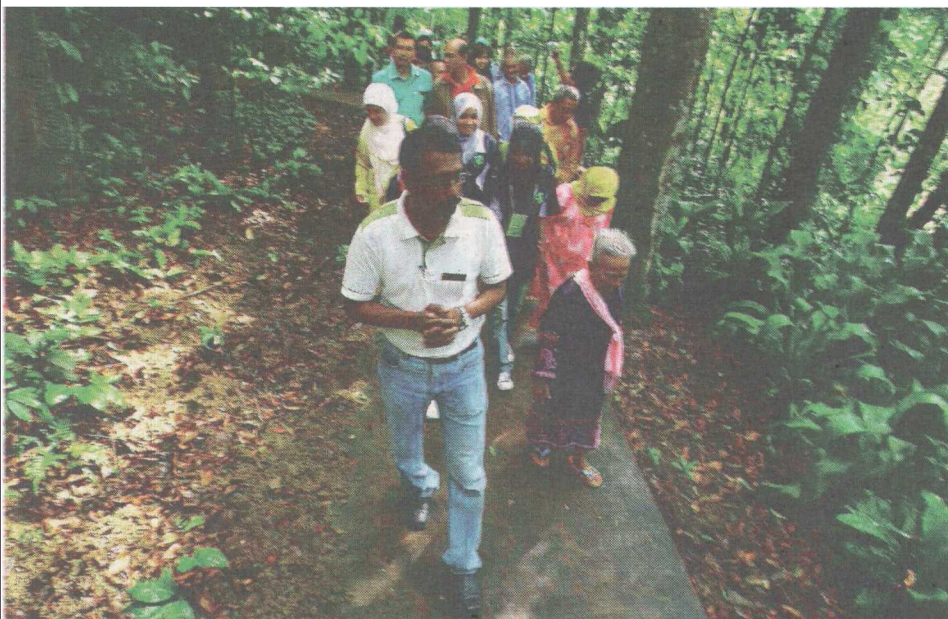
The celebration at FRIM concluded with a prize-giving ceremony, with winners of the various contests receiving prizes totalling RM1,500, while the children and senior citizens from Kompleks Penyayang Bakti Sungai Buloh were presented with souvenirs from the organisers.

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Off to the forest: Prof Dr Sahol (second from right) and Dr Abdul Rahim (right) flagging off the treasure hunt participants during the World Forestry Day celebration at FRIM.



Enlightening experience: FRIM research assistant M. Markandan leading the senior citizens as they stroll along the Razak Walk during the guided tour of the forest.

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Appreciation for nature: The children from Kompleks Penyayang Bakti Sungai Buloh concentrating on their art during the colouring competition.