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Haliza Mokhtar teaching a group of children on how to recycle boxes into playing objects at the Environmental Education Centre in FRIM on Wednesday. — NST picture by Azahan Rosli

Nurturing young minds

IN many ways, the newly launched Environment Education Centre for schoolchildren could act as a shield against forest degradation in years to come.

Its humble wooden structure near the Sungai Kroh picnic site within the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) green lung, will serve as a platform for nature lovers to impart their knowledge and sense of appreciation for trees to young minds.

Through simple nature walks, recycling lessons and learning about seeds and water quality, children would be given a head start to preserving the quality of greenery.

"We need to teach children about 'brown issues' like recycling and sus-

tainable living as well, not just focus only on the green issues," said FRIM ecotourism and urban forestry programme director Dr Noor Azlin Yahya.

"Hopefully this would help them make an impact on the environment."

The centre, set up with the support of Tetra Pak (M) Sdn Bhd, will begin its operation today to mark World Environment Day and the 25th anniversary of FRIM.

Tetra Pak, through its Nurture for Nature recycling programme in schools last year, had contributed RM10,000 for educational material, bookshelves and bins made from recycled beverage cartons, stationery, posters and other recycled items.

Dr Noor Azlin said the centre would

create programmes for batches of 15 schoolchildren at a time.

She said the Sungai Kroh picnic site was chosen as the site for the centre as it could tap into the multitude of visitors that use the site for leisure activities.

"The children can join us and find out the real value of trees. We want to tap into this group so we can change their habit of polluting the environment."

The activities lined up at the centres are designed for those from pre-school to secondary school. Teachers would also be trained as facilitators.

"We want to enrich the education component. We want to teach the children not to take nature for granted. Trees won't be around forever," Dr Noor Azlin said.