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# Pushing for higher bamboo usage

## FRIM: Move will help reduce timber imports

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Photos by **SIA HONG KIAU**

**B**AMBOO, which grows in abundance in Malaysia, could very well reduce the dependency on timber.

"Most people use it for handicraft but many people do not realise that it's a strong wood that can be used for construction," said Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod.

Speaking to reporters after flagging off 370 cyclists in its Green Cycle II on last Sunday, he said FRIM had been conducting research on the use of bamboo for more than 10 years and

**»We will be launching a house made entirely from bamboo by next year«**

**DATUK DR ABD LATIF MOHMOD**

would start pushing its usage within the next six months.

He said the bamboo had a hollow stem and using the latest technology, the bamboo can be crushed and densified.

Because it regenerates quicker than timber trees, Dr Abd Latif said bamboo was more environment-friendly and compared with timber, it was more fire-resistant and not easily attacked by termites.

"We will be launching a house made entirely from bamboo by next year and people would be surprised to see it because it doesn't look like it's made from bamboo. Increasing the usage of bamboo would help to reduce the import of timber," he said.

The bamboo research involved a

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joint venture between FRIM and a company based in China.

Besides bamboo, Dr Abd Latif said FRIM had also been concentrating its research and development on turning empty food bunches (EFB) into paper.

"As a major palm oil producer, Malaysia produces about five million tonnes of EFB a year and they are mostly gone to waste.

"By using EFB, we won't have to cut down so many trees to produce paper," he said.

Although the initial cost could be expensive, he believed that the cost would be reduced with more research done on the methods.

Dr Abdul Latif also presented prizes to the winners of the Green Cycle II.

The event was organised in conjunction with the World Environment Day and also to celebrate FRIM's 25th anniversary.

"The trail offers participants something different from cycling on roads.

"They can feel the fresh air and enjoy the greenery.

"We want to raise awareness about our forests and the importance of preserving it," he said.



**Lush greenery:** Participants of the Green Cycle II enjoy the fresh air amid the FRIM forest.



**No easy task:** Cyclists got off their bikes and proceeded on foot during certain parts of the trail.