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International awards for two Malaysian forest researchers

KUALA LUMPUR: Two Forest Research Institute Malaysia (Frim) researchers will receive awards for their scientific works at the 22nd International Union of Forest Research Organisations (IUFRO) World Congress in Seoul next week.

They are Dr Nor Azah Mohammad Ali and Tnah Lee Hong. Dr Nor Azah will be among 11 scientists worldwide to receive the IUFRO Scientific Achievement Award at the opening ceremony of the congress on Monday.

Tnah Lee Hong, a research officer attached to the institute's Genetic Laboratory, will receive the Student Award for Excellence in Forest Sciences on Tuesday.

She is one of three winners in the category.

In a statement, Frim said Dr Nor Azah, who is Frim Scientist of the Year 2009, had 23 years of research experience in natural product chemistry specialising in essential oil research related to forestry, agriculture and herbal industries.

As Frim Herbal Product Development Programme head, she leads a multi-disciplinary research team actively involved in essential oil research, herbal research and cosmeceutical product development.

The research areas covered by her team include essential oil extraction technology, olfactory evaluation, chemical profiling, bioactivity and product formulation.

She has filed three invention disclosures and won 12 innovation awards for her research.

Some of her research work has been taken

up and commercialised by the herbal industries. Apart from product development, she is also directly involved in agarwood (gaharu) research.

Tnah's research areas cover molecular markers technology, forensic forestry, phylogeography and plant population genetics.

With her Master's thesis on 'DNA fingerprint Databases of Chengal (*Neobalanocarpus heimii*) for Forensic Forestry Investigations', she has developed comprehensive databases, which are the first for tropical species.

The availability of DNA fingerprinting databases for the important timber species in Malaysia will help enhance forestry enforcement officials' capacity to curb illegal logging.

Prior to this, several other Frim researchers received similar recognition for their scientific works from IUFRO.

They included current Frim director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod, who received the Scientific Achievement Award in 1995, Dr Lee Su See, the Scientific Achievement Award (2000) and Dr Rahim Sudin, the Outstanding Doctoral Research Award (2000).

Founded in 1892, IUFRO is a non-profit, non-governmental international network of forest scientists, which aims to promote global cooperation in forest-related research and enhance the understanding of the ecological, economic and social aspects of forests.

It unites over 15,000 scientists in almost 700 member-organisations in over 110 countries. - Bernama