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FRIM Pasoh – a centre for forest ecology research

KUALA KLAWANG: Ever since its establishment in 1929, the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) has been synonymous with forest conservation and ecology in the country.

However, not many people are aware of the FRIM's important role in protecting the Malaysian forests through research on its ecology.

For them, forest is merely the flora that supplies oxygen to various species of fauna.

The reserve forest at Pasoh in Negeri Sembilan is made up of lowland jungles rarely found in other countries.

Maintained by the FRIM in collaboration with the Negeri Sembilan Forestry Department, the forest is located about 8 kilometres from Simpang Pertang and two-and-half hours drive by road from Kuala Lumpur.

FRIM Pasoh is renowned for studies on lowland biodiversity and ecosystems and has been declared as an International Biosphere Reserve under the MAB (Man and Biosphere) Programme.

The main attraction at FRIM Pasoh is its 50 hectares of natural and preserved jungle ecology that functions as an arboretum for research and education on botanical plants. This comprises 340,000 trees from 814 species, of sizes not less than 1 centimetre in diameter.

The forest is home to 25 per cent of the tree species in Malaysia. One

quarter of the nation's palm tree plantation is located here.

The facilities at FRIM Pasoh include a hostel and seminar room, apart from a small laboratory cum library which has Internet facility for research work.

As the FRIM station is equipped with a generator, visitors need not worry about the electricity supply despite being in the middle of the jungle. A 30-metre high "Tree Tower-Canopy Walkway System", built by Japanese experts in 1992, is another attraction in the forest and the only one of its kind in Malaysia.

FRIM Senior Research Officer Wan Mohd Shukri Wan Ahmad said the tower monitors the climatic changes and provides data on it.

"It also measures the quantity of carbon dioxide in the forest," he added. The tower has equipment to gauge the temperature, sound and moisture, which are available at every five metres of the structure. On the top there is a wind gauge to measure the speed of the wind, as well as a rainwater gauge to measure the amount of rainfall in the area.

When asked to comment on FRIM Pasoh's contribution to the society, Wan Shukri said these could be traced to economic, social and environmental aspects.

"From the social aspect, FRIM provides the place for education and research for those who come to gain knowledge on forest ecology.

Many researchers from worldwide came here to carry out their studies on forest ecology," he remarked.

Under the economic aspect, FRIM allows the people, including university graduates, to work on contract in the relevant fields.

This helps them in broadening their knowledge in forest ecology while also earning an income.

Wan Shukri further said that the FRIM Pasoh also contributed to environmental conservation by maintaining the jungle ecology.

In its efforts to achieve success, FRIM Pasoh is on its way to becoming a centre of excellence for the Tropical Ecology Research and International Forest Biological Course (IFBC).— Bernama