

Headline	FRIM buffer zone under threat		
MediaTitle	New Straits Times		
Date	09 Mar 2012	Color	Full Color
Section	Supplement	Circulation	136,530
Page No	S5	Readership	330,000
Language	English	ArticleSize	247 cm <sup>2</sup>
Journalist	Olivia Peter	AdValue	RM 8,027
Frequency	Daily	PR Value	RM 24,082



# FRIM buffer zone under threat

**ENCROACHMENT:** Forest Research Institute Malaysia faces pressure of human activities

OLIVIA PETER

KUALA LUMPUR  
streets@nstp.com.my

**T**HE buffer zone of Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM), a five-metre strip of land between the jungle and neighbouring residential and industrial areas, is in danger of being compromised.

There is fear that encroachment will affect all creatures in the vicinity, from microscopic insects to human beings.

FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod said the 512ha research forest was under stress.

"FRIM is a place for forest education, but tourists, who are mostly scientists, spotted leftovers from people's kitchens while doing research in the forest," he said.

Abdul Latif has called on the local authorities to keep the buffer zone in mind when approving house extensions and development projects.

He said FRIM had to cut down more than 30 88-year-old trees last year to ensure the public's safety.

FRIM, he added, also spent close to RM2 million on waste management last year.

"Sometimes, people dump old mattresses, food waste and other things into our buffer zone, even though the borders are already fenced up," Abdul Latif said.

He said harmful materials such as plastic and polystyrene were dumped indiscriminately in the park, especially on Monday mornings.

Abdul Latif said this discarded material could not have come from the staff of FRIM as the organisation had been following a "no plastic and polystyrene" policy since last year.

"Providing more rubbish bins is not the ultimate solution as the wild animals might come and rummage through it later," Abdul Latif added.

"Therefore, we are going to encourage visitors to take away their rubbish in future."

Another source of worry for Abdul Latif are open fires near FRIM which

could interfere with the carbon system of the forest.

Currently, the forest absorbs and recycles carbon dioxide produced by about 700,000 people every year.

Other serious issues that could crop up include the pollution of the water catchment area, which would be detrimental to the quality of the water supply of FRIM and neighbouring areas such as Kepong and Ulu Kepong.

Some people, he said, were introducing unwelcome alien species into the forest ecosystem.

"The invaders will disrupt the food chain cycle and may wipe out endangered species," Abdul Latif said.

Even though FRIM was created artificially on degraded mining and vegetable growing land its biodiversity is comparable to that of any virgin forest, and is home to some endangered species. Abdul Latif said FRIM ranked first among tropical forest research facilities.

"If people still do not respect the environment and are not aware of its importance, it defeats the purpose of conserving the forest," he added.



Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod says FRIM ranks **first among tropical forest research facilities**