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# To the aid of trees under threat

## FRIM-UiTM tie-up to enhance conservation of species

**T**HE Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) Perak recently to pave the way for greater collaboration in research, development, conservation and management of biodiversity and habitats.

The MOU will serve the common interests of both parties and contribute towards the conservation of threatened species and their natural habitats in the country.

The move will also enhance cooperation between FRIM and UiTM Perak in the areas of research and development (R&D) in flora and fauna diversity and conservation, conservation management for threatened plant species and their habitat, technology transfer, training and capacity building, as well as education and public awareness.

FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod represented the Malaysian Forestry Research and Development Board (MFRDB) in signing the MOU while UiTM Perak was represented by its rector Prof Dr Zainab Mohamad.

The signing ceremony, held at the UiTM campus in Seri Iskandar, Perak, was witnessed by FRIM biodiversity division director Dr Saw Leng Guan and UiTM Perak senior deputy registrar Asiah Saleh.

The MOU formalises conservation efforts which began in 2006 with the discovery of five highly-threatened dipterocarp species, namely *Dipterocarpus semivestitus* (*keruing padi*), *Hopea apiculata* (*resak melukut*), *Shorea macrantha* (*meranti kepong hantu*), *Shorea hemsleyana* (*cen-*

*gal pasir daun besar*) and *Vatica flavida* (*resak padi*), in the freshwater forest swamps within the university campus.

FRIM researchers, who first discovered the presence of the five species and have been monitoring the ecological behaviour and health of the individual trees, had forwarded a proposed action plan to UiTM Perak in 2009.

Since the discovery, the university has taken steps to safeguard the remaining population of the species including protecting the natural habitats.

"Safeguarding the habitat of a species is the most critical aspect of conservation. In this case, we thank UiTM Perak for responding positively to our recommendations.

"The university reviewed its development master plan for this purpose and is actively incorporating research elements into its conservation programme," said Dr Abd Latif.

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**Safeguarding the habitat:** Abd Latif (sixth from right), Zainab (fourth from left) and other representatives from FRIM and UiTM Perak posing for a photograph under one of the trees identified as highly threatened in the campus.