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Getting in touch with nature

FRIM celebrates World Environment Day in a therapeutic way with joggers

By SHEILA SRI PRIYA

KUALA LUMPUR: The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) is a precious natural heritage located right in the middle of the Klang Valley. The man-made tropical forest was built on former tin mining land in Kepong and is surrounded by the Bukit Lagong Forest Reserve.

Recently, a group of joggers gathered to celebrate World Environment Day at the park.

FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod said hundreds of thousands of Malaysians visited FRIM every year.

"This shows we are more appreciative of nature. More people realise that greenery is therapy for the mind, body and soul.

"This makes it essential that places such as FRIM, which is easily

accessible to people in the Klang Valley, is protected for the enjoyment of future generations," he said.

Dr Abdul Latif encouraged the joggers to become FRIM ambassadors and continue to help preserve the millions of plants located within the 544.3ha site.

He said visitors should take a personal interest and report to the management if they noticed anything.

"Last year, 38 trees fell on the same day during a storm. We want visitors to report to us.

"Although we hire rangers, this is not enough as we also need the public to be our eyes and ears," said Dr Abdul Latif, adding that FRIM had been declared a national natural heritage site.

He said even with the status, finding money to upkeep the forest is a struggle.

"We need more funding to help manage the area and provide better facilities."

The forest also attracts several species of birds and ducks from as far as Bangladesh and China. They stop here before continuing their journey to countries like Australia.

"Endangered species such as the

Masked Finfoot from China visit the lakes here due to the conducive environment and plentiful source of fish. Hence, visitors are not allowed to fish here."

He noted that even bird droppings were important as they contained seeds of plants and trees from other parts of the world.

"This will enable more rare plants to grow at FRIM."

Dr Abdul Latif advised the public to observe forest etiquette and never catch any bird or take home the fruits or plants.

"We once had a pair of beautiful rare birds in the forest. Suddenly, they went missing and I later learnt that the birds were caught for consumption."

He said that some people mistakenly believe that certain animal parts or plants had medicinal value and could cure diseases.

"Don't deprive future generations of this wonderful natural habitat," said Dr Abdul Latif, adding that tigers and pythons had been sighted in the forest.

He said he was thankful that FRIM was a popular venue for companies to hold their corporate social responsibility programmes and many helped to clean it.

Valuable research is also conducted at FRIM.

"Students from Iskandar Malaysia's University Teknologi Malaysia research centre were here to conduct research on the endangered tree species called *Keruing Padi* (*Dipterocarpus Semidvestitus*).

"We have the last 50 *Keruing Padi* trees in the world at FRIM and these students helped to cultivate more," said Dr Abdul Latif, who look forward to more such research taking place at FRIM.

The FRIM forest has six trails — Keruing Trail, Salleh Nature Trail, Engkabang Trail, Rover Track, Sebasah Trail and Razak Trail.

The Keruing trail winds its way through one of FRIM's oldest planta-

tions. The trail got its name from the *Dipterocarp* species of timber along this trail.

The Salleh Nature Trail highlights FRIM's history of plantation forests.

It is slightly undulating and winds along a patch of natural forest and into a forest plantation established as early as 1928. This trail is named after former FRIM director-general Tan Sri Dr Salleh Mohd Nor.

Engkabang Trail takes you through former wetlands and is partially covered by grassland and secondary forest.

The Rover Track is a dirt road which follows the 170m contour on the slopes towards the summits of

Bukit Beruang (401m) and Bukit Nolang (439m). It is a popular track for joggers.

Sebasah trail is located near SK FRIM in Jalan Kapur. This trail is named after the Sebasah trees (*Aporosa Arborea*) which are abundant in this area.

The Razak Walk is located in the Kepong Botanic Gardens and was launched on Jan 14, 2008. It is named after another former FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Razak Mohd Ali. It is the first disabled-friendly trail in Malaysia.

A song from Bollywood movie *One 2 Ka 4's* song sequence was shot here.

"Shah Rukh Khan danced near the tree located at the entrance to FRIM — Yellow Rain Tree (*Samanea Saman*). Since then the tree is known as the Shah Rukh Khan tree."

Visit www.frim.gov.my for more information.

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— DR ABDUL LATIF MOHMOD

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Brisk business: Joggers checking out the car boot sale at Kepong FRIM.



Picnic time: Families enjoying their day at FRIM.

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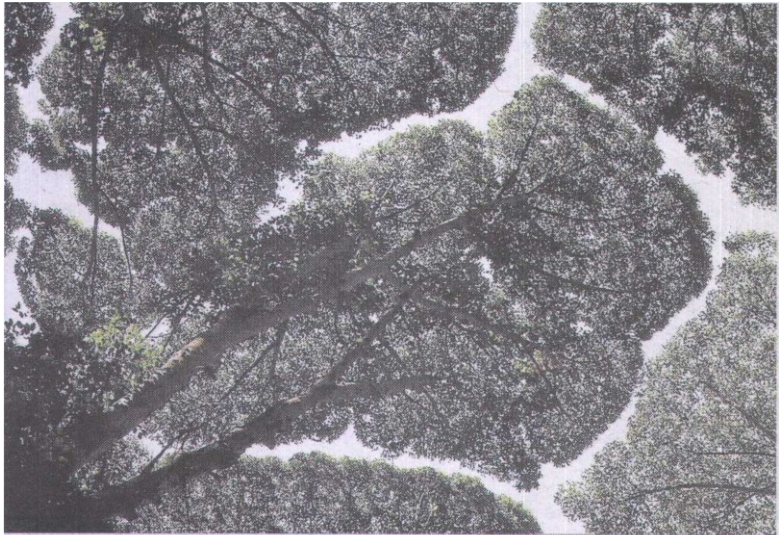


Watching the water: Joggers watching the giant dragon fish from a bridge.



Mighty attraction: Joggers marvelling at the elephant tree.

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Canopy art: Kapur tree, which is famous for forming a ‘jigsaw puzzle’ in the sky, found at Kepong FRIM.



Trail blazers: Joggers eagerly following the trail at FRIM forest.

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Informative: Joggers listening to a presentation at Kepong FRIM.



Rare species:
Engkabang trees
found at FRIM.