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MNS fully behind FRIM against plan

'Highway a threat to national treasure'

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PETALING JAYA: Malaysia's image will suffer internationally if a proposal to build an elevated highway within the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) area materialises, Malaysian Nature Society (MNS) president Prof Dr Maketab Mohamad said.

He strongly condemned the proposed highway across FRIM, which is the largest and oldest man-made tropical forest in the world. He called on the developers to find an alternative route that would not threaten FRIM's grounds.

"We will fight the developers because we cannot allow such a thing to happen to a national treasure. We are fully behind FRIM's staff and we can quickly mobilise over 1,000 supporters via social media," he said in an interview yesterday.

Last week, FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod said its Kepong campus was under threat by the proposed highway. He said he would "fight to the end" against the move, as it would be detrimental to the many endangered plant species within its grounds.

FRIM, which spans 544.3ha, received its freehold land title from the Selangor govern-

ment in 2007.

Founded in 1929, it is surrounded by the Bukit Lagong forest reserve and has become a highly popular public spot for outdoor recreation and nature education activities.

Once a degraded area with abandoned mining pools and barren vegetable farms, FRIM has been globally lauded as a model of successful reforestation and was recognised as a natural heritage in 2009 and declared a national heritage in 2011.

Known for its research excellence, among the facilities there are a 106-year-old herbarium housing over 200,000 specimens and a xylarium with over 10,000 wood samples from over 1,500 species.

Over the years, the numerous awards picked up by FRIM include the International Socrates Award for Best Enterprise (Applied Research and Scientific Achievements) 2011 from the Europe Business Assembly in 2011, with Dr Abd Latif earning the International Socrates Award for Manager of the Year (Applied Research and Scientific Achievements) 2011.

It is working to attain Unesco World Heritage status by 2017.