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Leave FRIM alone!

INDONESIA'S foremost Islamic body has issued a *fatwa* (religious edict) against the illegal hunting and trade in endangered animals in the country, which the World Wildlife Fund hailed as the world's first.

The *fatwa* was effective on Jan 22 but was only made public recently. The Majlis Ulama Indonesia declared such activities "unethical, immoral and sinful".

"All activities resulting in wildlife extinction without justifiable religious grounds or legal provisions are *haram* (forbidden). These include illegal hunting and trading of endangered animals," said Asrorun Ni'am Sholeh, the secretary of the Majlis's commission on *fatwa*.

"Whoever takes away a life, kills a generation. This is not restricted to humans, but also includes God's other living creatures, especially if they die in vain," he added.

- For the first time, Indonesia's Forestry Ministry and the Majlis Ulama reportedly made a joint an-

NATURAL HERITAGE: Protect the fragile ecological system as a natural way of life

nouncement to drive home the *fatwa*, giving added assurance of the protection of the country's unique diversity of wildlife that are increasingly coming under threat from so-called "development".



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This move is very relevant to Malaysia because not only is it a Muslim country and one of the world's 12 megadiverse regions, but it is also under constant threat from "development".

The proposal to build an elevated highway through the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), which is acclaimed as "the largest and oldest man-made tropical forest in the world" and founded in 1929, came as a shock.

The alarm was sounded by FRIM director general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod who said that Kepong was under threat of the proposed highway. Undoubtedly, the proposed project is detrimental to many

endangered species within FRIM's grounds. In addition, FRIM is a popular green lung for recreational and nature education activities.

Once a degraded area with abandoned mining pools and barren vegetable farms, FRIM has come a long way as an acclaimed global model of reforestation and was recognised as a natural heritage in 2009.

In 2011, it was declared a national heritage said to house over 200,000 specimens in a 106-year-old herbarium and a xylarium with more than 10,000 wood samples from over 1,500 species. It is poised to attain Unesco Heritage status in 2017.

Given all these, it is only right that Natural Resources and Environment Minister Datuk Seri G. Palanivel is against the dubious proposal of the highway, although the plan will likely surface again. By then we hope Malaysians are better prepared and more aware of protecting the fragile ecological system as a natural way of life.

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