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Working towards biodiversity conservation

I REFER to the letter “Work to conserve heritage” (*The Star*, March 7) by Dr Saw Leng Gua of the Forest Biodiversity Division of the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and the report “Groups worry over quarry” (*The Star*, March 5).

Lafarge Malaysia has always stated its commitment to biodiversity conservation and in maintaining open communication with all stakeholders. We seek to balance the environmental footprint of our operations with the value created by our activities for local communities and our manufactured products that contribute towards societal development.

Biodiversity studies involving experts from the University of

Malaya are ongoing, as part of our Kanthan plant quarry development programme. This includes research on flora and fauna species in the areas proposed for development, which was completed last December. The study was extended

to ensure that associated work could be incorporated.

A number of actions have been launched following completion of the initial independent study, back in June:

- > Preservation and management plans for the conservation of “Cathedral Cavern” and its endemic species, such as the trapdoor spider (*liphistius kanthan*) and Gua Kanthan Bent-toed Gecko (*cyrtodactylus guakanthanensis*) following the identification of sensitive biodiversity during the study;

- > Studies on snail species following external research in the quarry buffer zone (this area is also being preserved); and

- > Additional studies in other areas proposed for development.

Since the programme was originally announced back in 2013, we have maintained our commitment of not mining in areas of the quarry identified for development until all biodiversity studies have been com-

pleted and an appropriate management plan put into place.

This remains the case and our quarrying activities remain within our currently consented area.

We are fully aware on the level of interest in the biodiversity of Gunung Kanthan. As such, we continue to seek appropriate partners with whom we can work in a constructive manner to study and conserve its biodiversity, and in restoring parts of our quarry, in alignment with Lafarge’s global commitment to biodiversity.

We are sincere in our intention to engage with FRIM – as well as other key stakeholders on the biodiversity conservation of Gunung Kanthan – and will continue to reach out, as the possibility of working together was evident in Dr Saw’s letter.

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