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Botanist wins prestigious Scottish award

PETALING JAYA: A lifetime study of plants may seem boring to many, but Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Research Fellow Dr Saw Leng Guan counts his blessings for having the best job in the world.

Dr Saw, who has four plant species named after him, said he has loved nature since he was young and was lucky to have been born in Malaysia.

"I have always loved nature and Malaysia has one of the most fascinating and most rich natural environments in the world.

"I'm so fortunate that I've got a job that allows me to do what I enjoy most," he said in a Whatsapp message here yesterday.

The four species are flowering plants; the *Begonia lengguanii*, *Orchidantha lengguanii*, *Thrixspermum lengguanianum* and the *Schizostachyum lengguanii*.

On Monday, Dr Saw was awarded the prestigious Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) Medal for his excellence as a taxonomist, his contribution to the understanding of Malaysian diversity and for the key role he has played in conservation over the past 30 years.

He received the award during the 10th International Flora Malesiana Symposium in Scotland.

The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh is a leading international research body in the education and conservation of plants around the world.

Born in Taiping, he has 34 years of experience in plant taxonomy, ecology and the conservation of



Leaf-ing a mark: Dr Saw giving a talk on palm species and plant conservation at FRIM.

Malaysian flora.

He is the fifth person to receive the award, which was first presented to Dr Edward Edmund Kemp, a former RBGE Curator and Scotland's Senior Horticulturist.

"It's a great honour to have received the award," he added.

A Bachelor of Science (Forestry) graduate of Universiti Pertanian Malaysia, he earned his Master of

Science (Pure and Applied Plant and Fungal Taxonomy) from the University of Reading in 1990 and his Doctor of Philosophy, also from the same university, in 1994 for his study on "The taxonomy and ecology of the genus *Licuala* (Palmae) in Malaya".

He began working for FRIM in 1982, serving as a Hill Forest Silviculturist, then as a Forest

Botanist before being promoted to Programme Director of FRIM Tropical Forest Biodiversity Centre in 2004.

Dr Saw, who retired from FRIM Forest Biodiversity Division last year before being appointed fellow, has published over 130 papers in journals and served as a member of various national and international committees.