

Headline	From tin mine to forest reserve		
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Journalist	ES TUNG	AdValue	RM 26,235
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# From tin mine to forest reserve



**L**OOKING at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia's current landscape, it is hard to imagine that a 100 years ago, the area was just an old tin mine, stripped of forest cover, or turned into farmland by residents in and around old Kepong.

In 1926, after consent given by the Selangor Regent for a forest research institute to be set up, a research nursery and experimental station was established by Dr F.W. Foxworthy, the first forest research officer. Foxworthy's name now lives in one of the roads in this popular park.

The water lettuce-filled pond is one of the mining pools from FRIM's past. It is located near the administrative block. Looking at the well-landscaped garden surrounding the pond, and the wooden foot bridge across the upper portion, one would never think that tin mining had had anything to do with this place.

In fact, my attention was drawn to it by the sight of visitors who were clapping at the lower end of the pond. They were calling out to something in the waters and only when I asked did I learn what the excitement was all about.

Beneath the calm waters are three giant arapaimas. These giants, native to the Amazonian jungle, would surface from time to time to showing themselves to the lucky few who knew how to coax them from their lair.

According to a FRIM staff, during feeding time, park staff clap their hands to summon the fish. Once the gentle giants surface, they would throw them their meal. By Pavlovian conditioning, these gentle giants now surface whenever they detect clapping sounds.

That day, I briefly caught sight of one, about 1.5 metres long, which lingered a while near the feeding platform as it responded to visitors' claps. There were several golden carp, each about a metre-long, making their rounds just below the greenish water.

A squirrel was busy munching away in the angiana tree overhead, not at all bothered by human presence.



## TRAVEL FILE

FRIM is a very popular getaway for city folk. There are well-paved roads here that lead to various attractions within its undulating forest conservatory.

These places include the arboreta, a canopy walk, camping grounds, a small waterfall and even a picnic area beside an eatery. There are also nature trails, a research centre, a museum-cum-research gallery and a library.

FRIM charges a nominal entrance fee per person, at RM1.05. If you are driving in alone, the charges are RM5.30.

It's RM1.05 more for any additional passengers. On workdays, vehicles are only allowed in after 8.30am. The roads here are a little narrow, so please drive carefully and watch out for cyclists.

Cyclists should be alert for joggers and trekkers. If you do not like insects, especially mosquitoes, get a repellent. For those who would like to stay for a night or two, there is a guesthouse, and camping grounds are available for rental. Call 03-6279-7000.

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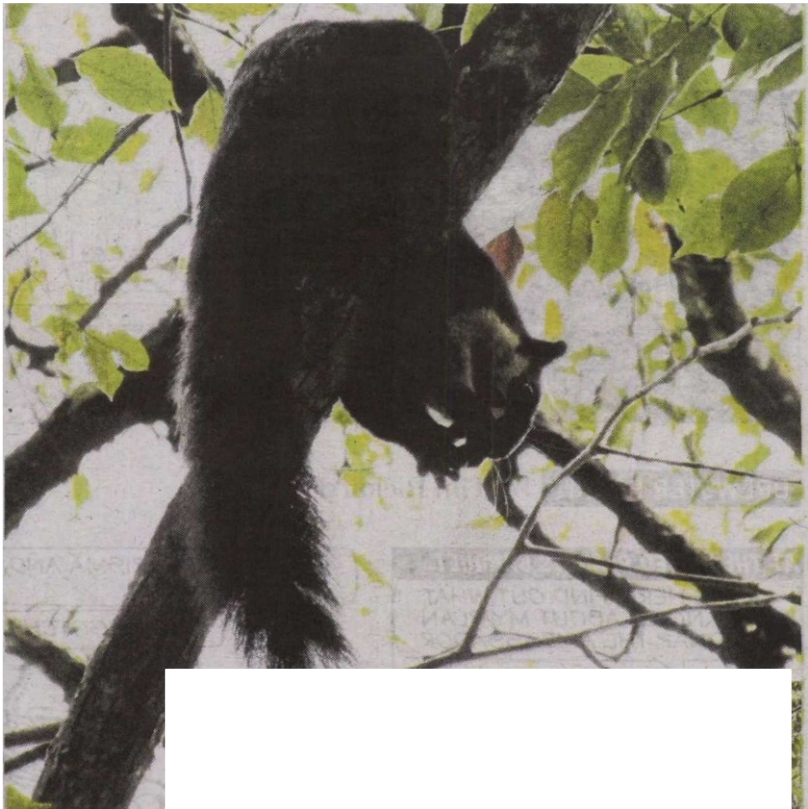
*The Sungai Kroh picnic area features a swimming pool from fording the river. There is also a restaurant adjacent to the picnic ground.*



**FROM LEFT:** A Japanese tortoise taking in the sun amidst the water lettuce; Weekenders checking out one of the trails.



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**FROM LEFT:** This body of water is the last reminder of Kepong's tin mines; A squirrel peeks from the cover of angasana leaves.