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# FRIM is Malaysia's pride

I AM proud to announce that the nomination of the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) and two other sites – Royal Belum State Park in Gerik, Perak, and the Quartz Ridge of Gombak, Selangor – has been unanimously accepted by the World Heritage Committee (WHC) at their meeting in Paris on 7 July.

Currently, the World Heritage Sites in Malaysia are: the Archaeological Heritage of Lenggong in Perak, Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak, Kinabalu Park in Sabah, and the historic cities of Melaka and George Town, Penang.

The idea of obtaining the World Heritage Site designation for FRIM was initiated by FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abd Latif Mohmod in 2008 with the full support of my ministry (Natural Resources and Environment) and the co-operation of the National Heritage department. We hope to obtain the status by 2020.

FRIM is integral to the preservation of our natural environment. But what exactly is the environment? Do we really

understand what it means?

When we hear the word "environment", what comes to mind too often is poisoning of rivers, ugly landfills, huge islands of floating plastic in our world's oceans and perhaps even recycling. The environment is so much more than that.

According to D. L. Johnson *et al*, in "Meanings Of Environmental Terms", published in the *Journal Of Environmental Quality* in 1997, the natural environment encompasses all living and non-living things occurring naturally, meaning in this case anything that is not artificial. The term is most often applied to Earth or some parts of Earth. This environment encompasses the interaction of all living species, climate, weather and natural resources that affect human survival and economic activity.

The concept of the natural environment can be distinguished as components:

1. Complete ecological units that function as natural systems without massive civilised human intervention, including all vegetation, micro-organisms, soil, rocks, atmosphere and natural phenom-

ena that occur within their boundaries and their nature.

2. Universal natural resources and physical phenomena that lack clear-cut boundaries, such as air, water and climate, as well as energy, radiation, electric charge and magnetism, not originating from civilised human activity.

The main reason that FRIM wants to be designated as a World Heritage Site is to ensure that this legacy of being the oldest man-made forest and model for the best forest rehabilitation and conservation on a degraded area is conserved for our future generations, and not just for Malaysians but for the world at large too. It is a living example and a repository of knowledge towards a sustainable existence on our planet.

FRIM has been submitted under the "Cultural" criteria due to its importance as:

- 1) The largest and oldest man-made tropical forest in the world;
- 2) A model and reference of regeneration of degraded tropical forests;
- 3) A unique ecosystem comprising various tropical flora and fauna;

- 4) The largest repository of *Germplasm Dipterokarpa*; and
- 5) The foremost research centre on tropical forests in the world.

If we are to be considered a developed nation, then we have to think and behave like one. We have to take the environmental factors into consideration every time we make a decision concerning our nation and its future, not just the physical and economic factors.

The process of becoming a developed nation not only involves increasing the per capita income but also the transformation of the whole society into one that is highly sophisticated and generous.

Are we Malaysians ready to exhibit those features that are paramount to a developed society? Only time will tell, and a deep-seated and genuine concern for our environment is one aspect of a developed society.

**DATUK SERI DR HAJI WAN JUNAIDI TUANKU JAAFAR**  
**Minister**  
**Natural Resources and Environment Ministry**  
**Putrajaya**