The book is commemorated by FRM's documentation of their habitats. The chapter on scientific research and conservation provides readers with a rare insight into the challenges faced by botanists in carrying out their work.

"The book covers about 450 species of wild orchids found in Peninsular Malaysia, including new discoveries regarding their diversity, habitats and sexual habits. It also briefly discusses scientific research and conservation issues for orchids growing outside their original habitats," noted Dr Abd Latif.

Scientists estimate that there are over 350,000 flowering species of plants in the world, and about 10 per cent of these are orchids.

The orchid - or Orchidaceae - family is the biggest flowering plant family and shows the largest diversity, comprising at least 22,500 unique species that have been identified and named so far.

Orchids are the most successful plants in terms of survival as they are found everywhere in the world apart from Antarctica, although they do have a climatic preference for tropical environments.

Even though orchids grow in diverse environments, the book "Wild Orchids of Peninsular Malaysia" reveals that Southeast Asia is home to the largest number of orchid species in the world, at over 10,000 species.

In fact, Malaysia has a very important role to play in the survival of the flora, as the Malaysian Peninsula has been found to contain 905 species from 143 genera of wild orchids.

Although scientists consider this a large figure, the real number may be even higher. The writer estimates that there may be up to 1,000 wild orchid species in the peninsula, given the fact that more species are being discovered every day through scientific exploration and lab research.

Malaysians play a very important role in the conservation of wild orchids in the country and the protection of their habitats.

Scientists believe that the human role has become even more critical because some 20 per cent of the wild orchid species in Peninsular Malaysia are endemic to the region, meaning that they cannot be found anywhere else.

The coffee table book also reveals another interesting fact: orchids are able to adapt to different habitats - such as different heights, humidity levels and virgin as well as disturbed environments.

If one were to explore the Montane or mossy forests like Gunung Irau in the Cameron Highlands, one may come across a mysterious type of orchid.

Several species of such orchids, which have been classified under the genus Corybas, are special and unique because they have a high percentage of endemism.

This species is also very localized in nature, which means that it grows only near the parent plant because its seeds cannot travel far and because it is very sensitive to environmental changes.

This unique plant grows from tuber roots located on the forest floor and bears only a single flower growing from a leaf.

The orchid is known as the "helmet orchid" due to its appearance. Its leaf,
meanwhile, is heart-shaped and grows to around two centimetres in height.

Scientists are worried that the plant’s sensitivity to locality and habitat has made the conservation of the species rather difficult.

Unfortunately, the species is also susceptible to the threat of global warming, which has been affecting weather patterns in the Malaysian Highlands.

In any case, the award-winning coffee table book symbolises the hard work of all of its four authors and FRIM’s research team.

Although the book was initially intended as a limited edition publication, demands for copies of the book exceeded all expectations, and reprints are now on the way.

Those interested in obtaining a copy can contact Norhara Hussein, the head of FRIM’s Publishing Unit, at 03-62797482 or send an e-mail to norhara@frim.gov.my. – Bernama

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**FRIM head Dr Abul Latif Mohmod (right) pose with Bank Negara Governor Tan Sri Dr Zeti Akhtar Aziz and other officials after winning the international award.**

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One of the 905 species of wild orchids that can be found in West Malaysia.