

Headline	FRIM continues national flora biodiversity documentation efforts		
MediaTitle	Borneo Post (Kuching)		
Date	04 Aug 2023	Color	Full Color
Section	Home	Circulation	60,767
Page No	10	Readership	182,301
Language	English	ArticleSize	186 cm ²
Journalist	N/A	AdValue	RM 2,536
Frequency	Daily (EM)	PR Value	RM 7,609



FRIM continues national flora biodiversity documentation efforts

KUALA LUMPUR: The Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) will continue its efforts to document the country's flora biodiversity based on scientific knowledge.

It is to enable well-planned conservation and sustainable environmental management by the government and stakeholders, FRIM said in a statement yesterday.

"Basic biological and ecological diversity information, geographic distribution, habitat requirements and conservation status are crucial in this documentation process. These factors will also contribute to the country's development in education, research, agro-food, eco-tourism and other areas," it added.

According to FRIM, until now the country's flora has not been fully documented.

Malaysia stands among the 17 megadiverse countries globally, boasting a diverse and exceptional array of flora and fauna, where 30 per cent or 4,500 of the 15,000 plant species in Malaysia, are considered endemic, indicating that they exist exclusively in specific regions, it added.

Protecting these species is of utmost importance for Malaysia since their extinction here would lead to their global disappearance, FRIM said.

Meanwhile, FRIM announced that the ongoing flora research projects focused on documenting Malaysia's flora, the 'Flora of Peninsular Malaysia' and 'Tree Flora of Sabah and Sarawak', have received a full commitment from dedicated research teams in the country and collaborative efforts from research institutions and universities worldwide.

Both projects have thoroughly studied and fully documented a total of 2,235 species (or 63.9 per cent) out of 3,500 tree species in Sabah and Sarawak, as well as 1,358 species (or 16.4 per cent) out of 8,300 vascular plant species in Peninsular Malaysia.

The findings have been published in 20 volumes of books.

The documentation led to the assessment of 1,292 species from 90 families, encompassing both ferns and higher vascular plants, to determine their conservation status.

"From this total, 370 taxa or 28.64 per cent are in the threatened category, with 77 taxa (5.96 per cent) classified as 'Critically Endangered' and 120 (9.29 per cent) as 'Endangered'.

"These two categories require immediate conservation actions to prevent extinction in the future," the statement said.

FRIM said despite many studies and inventories being conducted, 174 new taxa were still discovered during the documentation of the flora's biodiversity and, as such, the process needs to be systematically and periodically carried out.

Meanwhile, the institute has documented 2,830 species, 532 genera, 66 families, and 746 endemic plant species in Peninsular Malaysia through the Tree Flora of Malaya project.

It has also established a national-level flora biodiversity database with 265,784 records, accessible for download from the Malaysia Biodiversity Information System (MyBIS) website.

Additionally, it has successfully trained 16 new taxonomists, comprising eight PhD degree holders and eight MSc degree holders in the field of plant taxonomy and systematics.

"Research on Malaysia's flora biodiversity requires a long-term commitment, including the challenge of securing the government's sustained funding and dedication for continuous documentation.

"With ongoing support from the ministry and financial backing, we are confident that both projects will succeed and not only contribute to the advancement of Flora Malaysia but also ensure the retention of a group of trained botanists who understand the country's national flora," it said. — Bernama