

Brownlowia latifiana, a new species named after FRIM DG

frim.gov.my/en/brownlowia-latifiana-spesies-baharu-sempena-kp-frim/

5 April 2018 (Thursday) – Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) Director General (DG) Dato' Dr Abd Latif Mohmod created history once again when a newly-discovered plant species found in Terengganu was named after him.

Brownlowia latifiana or 'dungun latif' from the Malvaceae-Brownlowioideae family was discovered by FRIM researchers during a botanical expedition in Jerangau Forest Reserve (FR), Terengganu in 2009.

The species was named after Abd Latif in recognition of his contribution in obtaining RM7.6 million fund for the 'Safeguarding the Forest Plant Diversity of Peninsular Malaysia Project' under the Ninth Malaysian Plan. Through his initiative and efforts, FRIM successfully acquired the ownership of FRIM campus grounds covering 544.3 ha from the Selangor Government in 2007, making it the only forest research institute with its own land title; and went on to achieving the recognition as a Natural Heritage in 2009 and a National Heritage in 2012.

The announcement of this new species was made in conjunction with Abd Latif's 10th anniversary as FRIM DG this year; his 33rd year of service in FRIM as well as the 33rd Anniversary of FRIM.

Dungun latif is a shrub that can reach up to 15 m in height. This plant is found in areas about 90 m above sea level, in undulating and riverine areas of lowland dipterocarp forest on clay sandy and alluvial soils.

This species, endemic to Peninsular Malaysia, is categorised as Critically Endangered. It is only found in Jerangau FR and Sungai Jerangau in Dungun, which are not Totally Protective Areas (TPA). Compartment 95 of the FR is categorised as a production forest which was harvested in 1996 and Kuala Sungai Jerangau is surrounded by rubber plantations.

FRIM undertake efforts to safeguard plant species from the threat of extinction through *in situ* conservation, by establishing conservation areas within the original habitat; *ex situ*



Dungun latif tree at its natural habitat.



Abd Latif holding the *Brownlowia latifiana* seedling at the nursery.

conservation involving the conservation of a small portion of germplasm in areas like botanical gardens and arboreta.

New species are named after researchers and dignitaries who have made much contributions to the biodiversity management and conservation, as a way of introducing the species to the public as well as highlighting the importance of conserving the species and their habitats especially the endangered species.

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Young fruits (above) and inflorescence of the species.