

# Conserve nationally important areas

WE wish to refer to the front page report "Logging out a forest reserve" (*The Star*, May 16) and the other related articles.

The Malaysian Cave and Karst Conservancy (MCKC) supports the call to have the total water catchment area of the three lakes – Ahning, Pedu and Muda – and a forested area of some 160,000ha, also known as the Greater Ulu Muda Forest to be totally protected.

This area should be gazetted as a protected forest reserve for water catchment purposes under Section 10 of the National Forestry Act, as well as a state or national park to help conserve its rich biodiversity and unique physical features.

Such protection will maintain

the integrity of the forest thus ensuring the continuous flow of natural water to the three lakes which supply water to millions of consumers in Penang, Kedah and Perlis as well as for agricultural use.

Water from the Muda River is used to irrigate the vast padi-growing area of the Muda irrigation scheme. As such, the Greater Ulu Muda forest is an area of national importance for food security.

The area also has a small but important limestone hill and associated caves that were completely unknown to the scientific community until they were first explored less than 10 years ago.

There is much that still awaits proper research and documentation as limestone hills typically

harbour a large number of species that are not found anywhere else.

MCKC would like to see better cooperation between the Federal and state governments in the conservation of nationally important areas such as the Greater Ulu Muda Forest.

As a matter of principle and policy, any crucial water catchment forest must not be disturbed in any way. Where necessary, the Federal Government should provide monetary and other incentives to allow state governments to manage important areas that benefit the nation.

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