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Celebration draws the crowds

Carnival-like atmosphere as visitors learn more about nature

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and JADE CHAN



THE sight of thousands of green enthusiasts was a heartening one at The Star's Green Day Celebration yesterday as the visitors pulled their strengths together to help the ailing planet.

In the midst of the lush greenery at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) in Kepong, visitors picked up recycling tips, admired nature's beauty and reinforced the message of environmental conservation in a carnival-like atmosphere.

With children, parents and even grandparents in tow, they also found the event a great platform for them to meet like-minded people to exchange ideas and resources on recycling.

The event was organised in conjunction with World Environment Day 2009 by The Star in collaboration with FRIM with BonusLink and Philips Malaysia as anchor sponsors.

Federal Territories Minister Datuk

Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin and wife Datin Nafesah Raja Nong Chik, The Star group chief editor Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai, BonusLink general manager Victor Goon and FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod launched the event that was themed Go Green, Live Green.

Raja Nong Chik stressed the need to protect the environment and educate Malaysians on the importance of going green.

"What we do today reflects what we need to do on a regular basis," he said, adding that he was amazed with what the forest had to offer, as his last trip to FRIM was 10 years ago when his children were younger.

Exhibitors created a scene as busy as any other marketplace, except that all merchandise was environment-friendly and all activities sent out a green message.

Suria FM and TV3 brought a bevy of artistes including Farah Asyikin, Fazli Zainal, Aizat, Karam Singh and Azharina to sizzle it up alongside



Driving home the message: The climate refugees in action during the event.



Checking it out: Siblings Julian, 14, (back) and Lisa Ngui eight, counting the number of mobile phones in a glass case with their cousin Hoong Yik Mun, nine, for a contest at Nokia's booth.

RED FM's Morning Breakfast Crew JD & Dilly while Drum Circle conductor Bill Lewis defied fatigue as he led participants in drumming up a loud message to save the Earth.

Bonuslink had set up a vibrant booth where children took part in the Colour My World session where they combined their efforts to paint a beautiful scenery, while others had fun with sand art, face-painting and interactive games. Adults were also rewarded for being environmentally conscious as each received 100 points for subscribing to e-statements.

Nokia collected 230 pieces of used phones, batteries and accessories at its booth that offered an idea on how the devices could be recycled. Those who sent in used phones were thanked with the adoption of a tree planted in their name in Lombok, Indonesia, and stood a chance of winning a Nokia phone.

"Sending our phones here for recycling is much more meaningful and interesting than trading them in," Imran Zainal Abidin, 33, who was there with his girlfriend Suria Zainal, 39, said.

The couple were true greenies and they called themselves "Daddy Penguin" and "Mummy Penguin" after being inspired by the touching documentary *March of the Penguins*.

"Organic waste is basically the only waste we have as they recycle everything else.

"I am going to learn how to

make eco-enzymes out of organic waste at the Justlife booth later," Suria said.

Justlife promoted organic products and healthy diets while Philips energy-saving bulbs were given away at *The Star* booth with the purchase of its publications. The Permais Recycling Stop was also abuzz with activities with visitors sending in recyclable items while the car boot sale had a kaleidoscope of offerings.

Many ventured into the jungle with FRIM and Malaysian Nature Society employees and volunteers who conducted canopy walks and nature trails. The sporty ones also had a taste of in-line skating and tree-climbing.

WWF Malaysia also collected an encouraging number of signatures for their campaigns to save turtles and to amend the Protection of Wildlife Act 1976. The BRATS and *Kuntum* also spread out green messages to the younger groups in fun ways.

Over at the car boot sale, there was a display of rescued cats that were available for adoption, in addition to the sale of clothes, accessories and knick-knacks.

"We're just volunteers who help take care of the strays and want to give them good homes," retiree Agnes Cheong, 62, said.

"The cats have all been toilet-trained, spayed and neutered by us.

"Once these cats have been select-

ed for adoption, it will take one to six months before we deliver the cats to their new homes."

Cheong said her friend, 60-year-old Lai Yi Chin who hails from Taiwan, taught her how to rescue and care for stray cats.

Cheong is also a volunteer at AnimalCare (tiny.cc/paws), an organisation that aims to sponsor the spaying and neutering of stray dogs and cats to address the issue of uncontrolled breeding of stray animals.

Celebrity Stephanie Chai also refreshed the green call when she came at noon.

"I'm sure you have noticed the hot and humid weather in KL over the past few days.

"There are so many things you can do to help change this," she said, adding that she was touched by the good turnout.

It was also heartwarming to notice that, unlike two years ago when the Green Day celebration was first organised, the crowd brought home their own waste and did not leave behind a mess of trash.



Game on: Visitors trying their hand at one of the activities lined up at the main stage of the event.

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Entertaining: Akademi Fantasia 5 participant Aizat belting out hits from his album *Cubaan Pertama*.



Here you go: BonusLink member services consultant Alphaeus Lim carrying Pavara Lam, 6, from Subang, to stick a flower onto a larger painting.