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Having fun: Raja Nong Chik (centre) having a go at the bowling game at the Brats/ Rage booth alongside Edison Lim, five.



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

Celebration draws the crowds

Carnival-like atmosphere
as visitors learn more about

Dateline: Kuala Lumpur

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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.

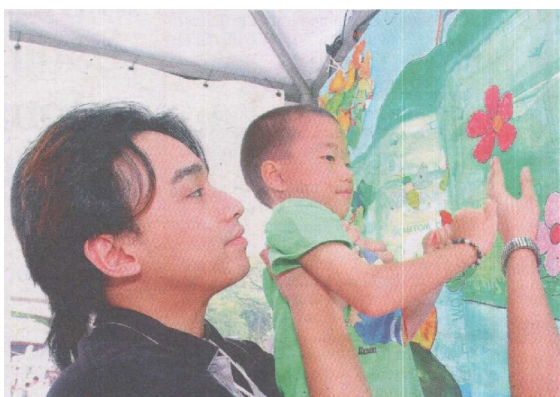
Federal Territories Minister Datuk Raja Nong Chik Raja Zainal Abidin and wife Datin Nafesah Raja Nong Chik, The Star group chief editor Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai, BonusLink general manager Victor Goon and FRIM director-general Datuk Dr Abdul Latif Mohmod launched the event that was themed Go Green, Live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



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

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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.



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

nature

Azharina to sizzle it up alongside 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.

Family affair for some at green day outing



All in the family: (from left) Fook Onn, Kee Leng, Beh and Tan look on as Ka Ming gets some help gearing up for the canopy walk.

"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 selected 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.

It was certainly a green affair at the FRIM yesterday with people from all background turning up to join in the host of vibrant activities lined up for The Star's Green Day Celebration 2009.

A group of students who called themselves the Malaysian Youth Climate Justice Network showed up to warn of the consequences of global warming in an unconventional manner — they showed up with torn clothes and set up a climate refugee camp where they begged for help with placards while handing out pamphlets on how rising sea levels were affecting livelihoods.

"We do not want to end up as real climate refugees and we need to push for a proper climate policy," 23-year-old Khairun Nisa Mohd Zabidi from UTM said.

It was also a family day out for some, with parents and even grandparents taking the opportunity to drive home the environmental message to the younger generation.

Chin Kee Ling, 67, and his 66-year-old wife Tan Siew Keng were among this group as they showed up with grandson Chin Ka Ming, 7, and his parents Chin Fook Onn and Beh Chooi Fong.

"This is the second time we have taken part and we appreciate efforts like this which send out an important message. The younger generations should also be exposed to nature more often as it is unhealthy for them to spend all their time in the concrete jungle," Siew Keng said.

According to her, the family had begun to sort out its trash about a decade ago. She added that if everyone could do something small for nature, the end result would be immeasurable.

Retired banker Puteh Aminah, 56, who was at the event with her three daughters, also said recycling had been an integral part of her children's upbringing.

For others, it was a chance to be closer to nature like businessman Chan Pak Keong, 40, whose family were among the early birds to sign up for a guided canopy walk.

With him were his wife Yong See Fong, 41, and children Amanda, 10, Belinda, nine, and Christopher, six.

Amanda said she looked forward to trying out the tree-climbing activity as it would be her first time climbing a tree, while Chan said the family was planning to check out the nature trail walk as well.

Kavita Kaur and her friend Tom

Ter Horst decided to drop by the event after her father, Narain Singh, read about it in the newspaper.

"We wanted to try the canopy walk, and we really enjoyed it. The weather was a bit hazy, but we could still enjoy a panoramic view of the forest and the city," the 28-year-old veterinarian said.

Ter Horst, a 26-year-old student from Holland who happened to be travelling in the region, also enjoyed the walk.

On his green practices, Ter Horst said instead of driving, he tries to cycle to his destinations.

"Besides cycling, I also take public transport, whether at home or in KL. It's not always easy, though," he said.

"Back home, it's compulsory for us to separate our garbage. We have several bins for organic items like food and garden waste, as well as recyclables like paper, glass, plastic and batteries," he added.

Both Kavita and Ter Horst agreed that more could have been done to create inform visitors about the canopy walk and publicise the celebration.

"The organisers should let visitors walk for free for special occasions like today.

"Alternatively, they could sell the tickets near the start of the walk or put up large notices to inform people about it," he said.

Over at the car boot sale, Nokia-Siemens vice-president Akash Das and his wife Julie Farnac were checking out the merchandise with their children Salome, eight, Milan, four, and their friend Ashika Dey, eight.

They were quite disappointed that they could not join the nature trail as people came as early as 7.30am to register for the first-come-first-served sessions.

Some students also took home some good ideas from the celebration.

A group of 10 Tunku Abdul Rahman College students had taken public transport all the way to FRIM to take part in the event and pick up some tips for a similar project they would be organising in August.

"It is an annual project and we have been highlighting this theme for the past three years," said Koh Jin Ern, 19, adding that the event at FRIM had enlightened them to approach the topic through different perspectives.

Her friend Nicole Tian, 21, added that it was sad that many people were still ignorant about the seriousness of global warming.