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Underprivileged kids camp out

Overnight stay at FRIM an adventure for 36

SOME 36 children excitedly stepped off the bus into Kem Perah in the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), Kepong for an overnight camping trip, courtesy of the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC).

Aged between 12 and 14 years old, the children from Desa Amal Jireh, Semenyih and Pertubuhan Kebajikan Ukhuwah Anak Yatim Miskin, Sabak Bernam were whisked to the man-made forest for an unforgettable experience.

Upon arrival, MTC director in the chief executive officer's office Suria Zainal briefed the children on Malaysia's sustainable forest management policies, the importance of environmental conservation and responsible utilisation of forest resources.

"This is the first time that MTC is organising an overnight camping event for underprivileged children. The trip will provide them the opportunity to get first-hand knowledge about some of nature's wonders and we hope to raise their awareness on Malaysian forestry," she said.

The children were also taught how to set up tents where they spent the night in.

Following light refreshments, the children went on a nature trek to the Canopy Walk, which proved to be an adrenaline-pumping experience for many as they traversed a 200m long bridge suspended about 35m above the ground with huge tropical trees as checkpoints along the way.

Their reward was a view of the Kuala Lumpur skyline as they stood on the highest platform, built around the trunk of a tree, along the bridge.

"The Canopy Walk was really challenging because the bridge was very high and swayed as we walked along it. But it was fun because at the top I had a beautiful view of the trees and the city," said Nurul Nadirah Zainal, 13, from Pertubuhan Kebajikan Ukhuwah Anak Yatim Miskin, Sabak Bernam.

After their bold walk above the trees, it was back to Kem Perah where the kids were challenged at the obstacle course, which tested their agility, teamwork, speed and creativity.

The highlight of the day was the night walk. It was a unique experience as the young ones absorbed the sights and sounds of the creatures of the night.

As they trekked through a river, the FRIM

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guides surprised them by catching a live prawn and asking one of the children to eat it, amidst squeals of excitement from the rest.

For 14-year old Chin Cal Vin from Desa Amal Jireh, the night walk was memorable. "I learned many new things about the forest during the walk. We saw the wild boar's foot prints and some unusual plants and animals."

The next day the children geared up for the treasure hunt – the culmination of their two-day camping adventure. Working in groups of three or four, the children raced against each other trying to solve puzzles and challenges at various check-points.

For members of the best four teams, their teamwork and diligence paid off as they were rewarded with prizes from MTC.



Crawl: An exercise in teamwork and co-ordination as the children did a 'caterpillar walk' through the grounds of Kem Perah.



Self setup: The children setting up their tents upon arrival.