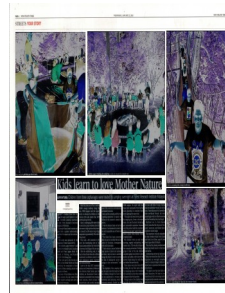


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Kids learn to love Mother Nature

ADVENTURE: Children from three orphanages were treated to camping overnight at Forest Research Institute Malaysia

FORTY children from three orphanages participated in an overnight camping experience at the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) here.

It brought them closer to nature and gave them a greater understanding and love for nature and the environment.

The camp was sponsored by the Malaysian Timber Council (MTC).

The children, aged between 9 and 16, were from Rumah Amal Limpahan Kasih and Pusat Jagaan Baitul Hidayah in Puchong, and Rumah K.I.D.S. from Subang Jaya.

They took part in the two-day activity at Kem Perah which had them spending the remainder of their school holidays enjoying nature and the great outdoors.

As many of the children were first-time campers, the day started with FRIM rangers teaching them how to pitch their own tents.

After this, they set off on a trail to FRIM's canopy walkway. Along the way, FRIM rangers took the opportunity to educate the children on the various trees and plants that were growing along the trail.

After a challenging 500-metre hike to reach the canopy walkway, the children were in high spirits as they bravely crossed the 200-metre long bridge suspended approximately 30m above the ground.

They took a few moments to observe the breathtaking view of the Kuala Lumpur skyline that was visible in between the foliage of the tree tops.

After the exhilarating walk, it was back to Kem Perah where the children underwent an obstacle course to test their endurance, speed, teamwork

and resourcefulness.

Later in the day, MTC communications and investments division senior director, Suria Zainal, gave the children an educational lesson on Malaysia's sustainable forest management policies, which include the preservation and careful management of the country's environmental and natural resources.

Suria said the camping activity was a learning experience to expose the children to the country's natural resources.

It was to educate them on the importance of environmental conservation and responsible use of forest resources.

"The forest has many resources which we use in everyday life such as timber for furniture, newspapers, books and tissue paper.

"It also acts as a natural habitat for many species of plants and animals, and that is why we have to carefully manage the forest in order to prevent any loss of endangered species or damage to the environment," said Suria.

The highlight of the camping trip was the night walk which had the children trekking through the forest for the rare opportunity to witness the mysterious and fascinating world of nocturnal animals. Guided by the FRIM rangers, the night walk was made more memorable with the full moon gleaming in complete view, faintly lighting the nature trail.

"The night walk was the best part of the camping trip. It was a fun experience, but also the most interesting and memorable experience because everything looked and felt completely different in the dark," said 12-year old

Intan Liyana from Rumah Amal Limpahan Kasih.

The children woke up early next morning, eagerly anticipating the treasure hunt. This was the climax of their camping adventure. Working in groups of four or five, the children competed against each other to solve puzzles and riddles, with clues to the answers found along the trails they had trekked the previous day.

Three teams won prizes from MTC for taking the top three spots, while the remaining teams were rewarded with consolation prizes that consisted of hampers filled with goodies.

Though some of the children were tired after the numerous activities, a few were still full of energy, hoping that their adventure would not end so soon. They reluctantly bid farewell to their new-found friends, but went home happy with fun-filled memories and the friendships they had forged.

Matthew Lee, 13, from Rumah K.I.D.S. described the trip as an "awesome" adventure, and wished that it could have lasted longer.

The experience was also enjoyable for twin brothers Mohd Airel Ezani and Mohd Airel Ezhar, aged 9, from Pusat Jagaan Baitul Hidayah.

They had fun playing outdoors and observing forests insects in their natural habitat.

Commenting on the trip, Suria said: "This is the second time that MTC has organised an overnight camping event for underprivileged children to allow them to experience the wonders of our forests.

"I'm glad to see that they fully enjoyed themselves. We hope to continue this activity to encourage youths to appreciate the natural environment and develop a love for the outdoors."

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Boys and girls **pitching up their tents.**

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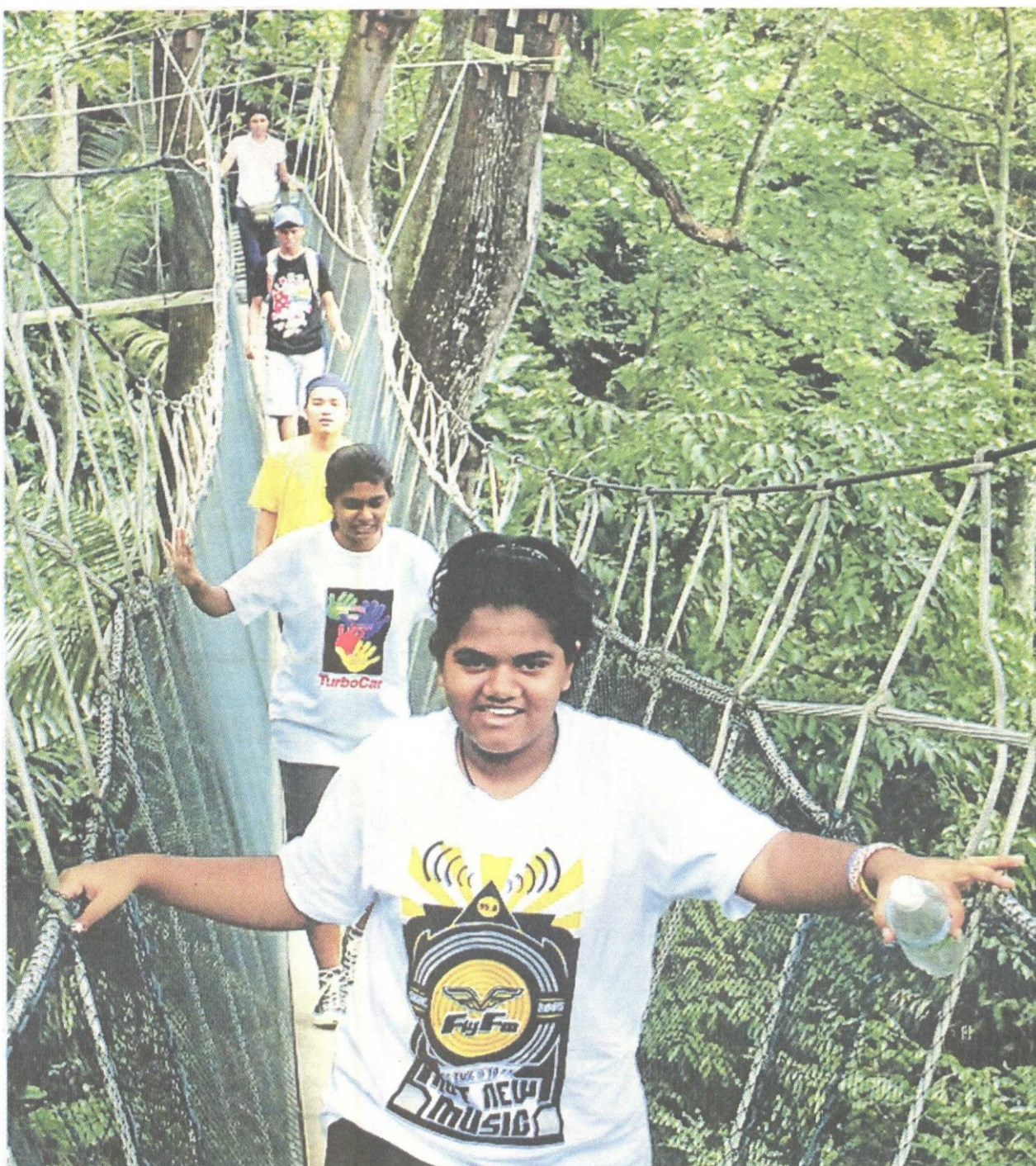
Suria giving *a briefing on forest conservation.*

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A **FRIM** ranger briefing the children as they sit around the campfire pit.

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Children **crossing the canopy walkway.**

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Children *searching for clues in the treasure hunt.*