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A place to call their own
The I-Play Park in Damansara Damai, Petaling Jaya, is created by children and is a collaboration between the Petaling Jaya City Council, MK Land, non governmental organisations and residents. >2

Children design public park in Damansara Damai

Project part of MBPJ's efforts in 'smart community engagement'

By **SHEILA SRI PRIYA**

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A GROUP of 60 children, aged between six and 16 years, brainstormed and decided how they would like their public park to be. The result of this is the I-Play Park in Damansara Damai, Petaling Jaya.

The idea was to provide public facilities based on the user's liking, especially children and youths from the locality.

The park has interesting theme-based activity corners and the facilities consist of an open classroom setting called the I-Think Chalk Board.

It also has an open mic-like

space called I-Green where youths can stage talent-based performances.

Petaling Jaya city planning director Sharipah Marhaini Syed Ali said although several activities had taken place in the park in recent months, its official launch would be held tomorrow.

The project that started last month is a collaboration between Petaling Jaya City Council, MK Land, non-governmental organisations (NGO) and neighbouring residents.

"This park was surrendered by

the developer to the council a long time ago and it was not well developed.

"After our discussions with the developer, we decided to rope in the community to bring life to this place," added Sharipah Marhaini.

Other facilities here include a mini library made of cabins, which is filled with donated books, and the I-Grow Herb Garden.

The herb garden will be managed by youths and several volunteers.

"Some children have also creat-

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ed a play area called I-Fun, where large, painted tiles will be used as chess boards.

"Traditional games such as *congkak*, made from used coconut shells, another idea by the children, is available here," she said.

The children, who were introduced to green living, have incorporated their green knowledge into setting up the park, too.

"They have incorporated used items such as plastic bottles and tyres as activity props and for decoration purposes.

"They also have some gardening knowledge and are able to plant herbs," she said.

Forest Research Institute Malaysia representatives have visited the park to carry out their activities.

Sharipah Marhaini added that the project was part of PJ Kita, which is the council's initiative to

engage with the community as part of the community inclusiveness required under the Local Agenda 21.

"Under PJ Kita, we focus on several core segments such as transportation, land use in the city, security issues, planning control and smart community engagement.

"This park falls under the smart community engagement segment," she said.

The council hopes the project will further foster community and digital engagement, partnership and cultural lifestyle.

"The developer who surrendered this land is also passionate about youths and their educational development. This was another reason why the park was more suited for this age group," she said.

The project would see resident groups coming together to keep

tabs on the facilities.

"The Damansara Damai neighbourhood has about 60,000 residents.

"We sincerely want to include communities in our projects as we have seen encouraging support from the neighbourhood," she said.

Environmental NGO Eijau Millennium Explorer executive chairman Mohd Fikri Mohd Bakri said the park was an inspiration for the youths to create awareness on green living.

"They get to experience learning through the forest in its natural environment.

"We hope the community will play a role in conserving this area and support this initiative," he said.

The public park is open from 8am to 10pm daily and is located near Jalan PJU 10/1 and SK Damansara Damai 1 in Petaling Jaya.



Children involved in the I-Play Park in Damansara Damai, Petaling Jaya were also introduced to green living and they have incorporated their green knowledge into setting up the park. Items such as plastic bottles and tyres are used as activity props and decoration.

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The I-Fun area is where children have painted large tiles to be used for boardgames.



Youths helping out with the placement of benches for their open class-room at the park, known as I-Think Chalk Board.