

Reaching out to the Orang Asli community

AID: JUITA, the NGO led by the wife of Johor Menteri Besar, co-organised a health camp for Orang Asli Seletar to better their quality of life

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THE catchy rhythm, created from simple bamboo percussion instruments and a *djembe*, along with the graceful movements of the Orang Asli Seletar dancers, captivated the audience.

The dancers wore anklets made from woven palm leaves, sea-shell necklaces and bracelets, and skirts of woven leaves worn over batik sarongs.

Even though the songs were sung in patois, a few common Malay words and the dancers' genteel gestures helped the audience understand that the dances were about fishing and farming.

Two groups from Kampung Sungai Temon performed at the show, which started with two children telling their stories in song, as a group of girls danced to music played by the boys.

Next, a group of older girls danced to the music and powerful vocals of a male soloist.

Afterwards, a group of ladies from Kampung Bakar Batu, who call themselves Ketam Bangkang and often represent the indigenous community in Johor at events, received loud applause as several guests recognised its brand of music and songs.

The cultural showcase was part of the programme in a health camp for

Orang Asli Seletar folk.

The camp also included a J-Robik exercise session, health checks, exhibition stalls by NGOs, as well as the sale of products and services by single mothers and members of the indigenous community.

It was held at Taman Merdeka in Johor Baru last month. It was jointly organised by Juita (Badan Amal Tenaga Isteri Wakil-Wakil Rakyat Negeri Johor), Yayasan Pembangunan Keluarga (Johor Family Development Foundation), and several other non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Juita is an NGO actively involved in community welfare projects for women and children in Johor.

In keeping with the Johor state government's aim of creating a caring community through holistic development, Juita has implemented 13 welfare projects in Johor since 1995 to help underprivileged single mothers and children with smart partnerships.

State departments, NGOs, as well as the private sector, have also participated in these projects.

Juita's welfare schemes aim to help the needy in Johor's multi-racial community.

The 14th Juita-ku Sayang project was launched in December last year to support the development of indigenous people, particularly the Orang Asli of Johor.

As Iskandar Malaysia develop

rapid pace, Juita is working in tandem with the Pengkalan Rinting assemblymen Chia Song Cheng and Nusajaya state assemblymen Datuk Abdul Aziz Saq look into the social and welfare needs of the indigenous community living in Simpang Arang, Bakar Batu and Temon villages.

Prof Datin Paduka Dr Jamilah, Juita's president and wife of Menteri Besar Datuk Abdul Gharman, recognises that indigenous people are the original settlers of the area Iskandar Malaysia project.

She is keen to help them benefit from the development through improving opportunities and skills training to promote a better quality of life.

"Health is wealth," said Jamilah explained how Juita aimed to encourage the Orang Asli community to take responsibility for their health. She emphasised that the community must work towards ensuring its health by adopting good habits, and keeping its neighbourhood clean.

She said the Orang Asli villages of Kampung Bakar Batu, Kampung Simpang Arang and Kampung Simpang Arang will be cleaned as a *gotong-royo* activity.

Bridges and jetties in these villages will be repaired, while regular health camps will be organised for the villagers.

Studies are already being carried out to ascertain the health and special needs of the Orang Asli children.

Through the research conducted by various local universities, it was discovered that the Orang Seletar have their own culture.

Jamilah said the marketable skills acquired under Juita's Income-Generating Skills programme can help them develop a business to ensure a financially stable future for their families.

Jamilah encouraged the locals to enrol for the entrepreneur courses designed to train them in skills such as foot reflexology and spa management, cooking, pastry-making, food and beverage packaging, tailoring, hairdressing, handicraft-making, child-minding, nursery care and gardening.

These courses, she said, will equip and enable the Orang Asli to start a business.

At the event, 70 underprivileged families from the three villages received a sum of RM250 each, out of which RM200 was in the form of credit stored in their MyKad, while RM50 was presented to them with sponsorship from MyKasih Foundation.

Using the MyKad credit facility, a cardholder can shop for basic necessities at Giant Hypermarket Tampoi and pay the amount electronically.

A brief demo of the cashless transaction was shown to guests, including the president of MyKasih Foundation, Ngau Boon Keat, who donated RM100,000 towards the 14th Juita-ku Sayang project.

"The community must work towards ensuring its health by adopting good habits and keeping its neighbourhood clean."

Prof Datin Paduka Dr Jamilah Ariffin,
Juita president



Orang Asli Seletar handicrafts on sale at the health camp.

The underprivileged families also received essential food items, including rice, from Chia Song Cheng and Abdul Aziz Sapian, the members of parliament for Pengkalan Rinting and Nusajaya, respectively.

The guests enjoyed a simple lunch, followed by several other activities, including games for the children.

A demo on how an Orang Asli can use the MyKad to shop without cash at the Giant! hypermarket in Tampoi being carried out.





Dressed in traditional wear, the **Orang Asli** women from Kampung Sungai Temon **are a friendly lot**. Pix by Peggy Loh



Orang Asli Seletar children sharing their culture through music and dance



Orang Asli single mothers (in white) being trained in foot reflexology.



Ngau Boon Keat (second from right) presenting a mock cheque for the **14th Juita-ku Sayang project** to Juita president, **Prof Datin Paduka Dr Jamilah Ariffin**.