'I Want To Touch A Dog' a big hit

BUILDING AWARENESS:
MAIS event aims to open up people’s minds on how to treat dogs

MORE than 1,500 people converged at the Central Park in Bandar Utama yesterday in a heartwarming display of tolerance and awareness about man’s best friend.

The first-ever “I Want To Touch A Dog” event, held to promote understanding of canines and for some, overcome their fear of dogs, was sanctioned by the Selangor Islamic Religious Council (MAIS) and featured participants from all over the country, including Pahang and Sabah.

The two-hour event saw members of the public play and pose for photos with the dogs, while at the same time, mingling with the pet owners.

The event’s organiser, Syed Azmi Alhabshi, said he did not like seeing how some Malaysians treated dogs and dog owners.

“I am used to seeing people throwing stones at dogs and I can’t stand that. I wanted to bring Malaysians together and help them overcome their fear of dogs.”

Syed Azmi said he had received some negative feedback for organising the event, but dismissed it as ignorance, adding that did not deter him from continuing with the event.

At the start of the event, a panel of speakers, including veterinarian Dr Hasnul Ismail, animal rescuer Muhaddad Iqbal Che Shamsiah, Muslim scholar Ustaz Iqbal Faridin and taxi driver Mohd Kamal Affendi Hasam shared their knowledge and personal experiences with participants.

Rizwan offered his services for the seeing-eye dog-assisted blind community by allowing canines into his cab, something not usually done by other taxi drivers.

Iqbal, who is from Islamic non-governmental organisation Pertubuhan Kesedaran Melayu dan Islam, said Islam did not teach its followers to hate dogs.

He said he was happy that so many people turned up to seek more knowledge and understanding about dogs.

Participants were also educated on the proper way of conducting sertu (cleansing).

Universiti Putra Malaysia student Diyanah Mohkayat said the event was good as it allowed people to get closer to dogs, while educating them on the proper way to cleanse themselves.

Similarly, Nurul Badriah Abu Bakar said the event helped open up people’s minds about approaching dogs.

“I am having lots of fun. I used to have so many questions about touching dogs and now that I know the proper way to cleanse myself and my clothes, I will not feel afraid to help dogs that are sick or injured.”

Dog owner Sam Kok Hong lauded the event for increasing awareness among communities and promoting greater interfaith understanding.