



Chan and his mongrel Milo, champion of the men's+large dog category.



The dog race was the highlight of the Dogathon 2017 at UPM in Serdang. — Photos: SAMUEL ONG and OH ING YEEN/The Star

# Fun-filled day at 20th Dogathon

## Event at UPM promotes awareness on strays and importance of neutering them

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IT WAS a day of fun in the sun for man's best friend at the 20th Dogathon at Universiti Putra Malaysia's (UPM) Bukit Ekspo in Serdang last Sunday.

Founded by the students of UPM's veterinary medicine faculty in 1997, the annual event marked its 20th edition this year with the theme "The Big 20: One fifth of a century; one dog for eternity!"

Professor Dr Mohd Hair Bejo, dean of the faculty, said the aim of the event was to promote awareness on stray animals and the importance of neutering them.

"It is also to raise funds for the annual Projek Pengkasaan Haiwan Terbiar (neutering of strays) or Pro-Kasih, an initiative done by veterinary students to address the issue of strays," he said.

A total of 850 dogs were registered for the event - 150 short of the organising committee's goal of gathering together 1,000 dogs.

But that did not deter any of the dog owners from having a fun outing with their furry companions.

There were dogs of all breeds and sizes at the event, but it was the large dogs like the St Bernard and Great Dane that were a crowd-puller.

Avid Cheong's 26-month-old Great Dane might have weighed in at a whopping 81kg, but the gentle giant sat quietly as people took photos with him.

Cheong, who also attended the event last year, said he had hoped to meet other owners of the breed.

Dog owners from other states also turned up. Takahiro Sunaga and his wife Kazumi Sunaga came all the way from Malacca with their miniature dachshunds.

It was their fourth time at the Dogathon.

Takahiro, a 46-year-old Japanese who has been living in Malaysia since 1997, said there were no gatherings for dogs and owners on such a scale elsewhere in Malaysia, and that was why they made

their way to UPM to support the event.

"In Japan, many places are quite pet-friendly. You can even take your dogs to the shopping mall.

"It is quite restricted here, but I understand that each country has different regulations," he said.

Sam Kar Haur, who attended the event with his wife and their 10-month-old corgi, Latte, agreed.

"There are not many events for dogs, especially outdoors. There also aren't many parks that allow dogs. The ones I know of are Desa Park City and Central Park in Bandar Utama.

"Dogs need social events, just like humans," he said.

The event started with the dog race, the highlight every year.

Chan Chee Song and his five-and-a-half-year-old mongrel Milo emerged champion in the men's+large dog category.

The 32-year-old programmer said he first saw Milo when the mutt was wandering around his neighbourhood.

"One day, I found him injured, so I sent him to the vet in UPM. He had a spine overlap and the left hind leg was not moving.

"I was told he had to be put to sleep. I did not have the heart to do it and took him home. I massaged the injured leg for almost a year, and it is now functioning," he said.

Aside from the dog race, there were other fun activities like Doggie Limbo, eating competition and a game of fetch.

One of the student volunteers said the games were designed to foster interaction between dog and owner.

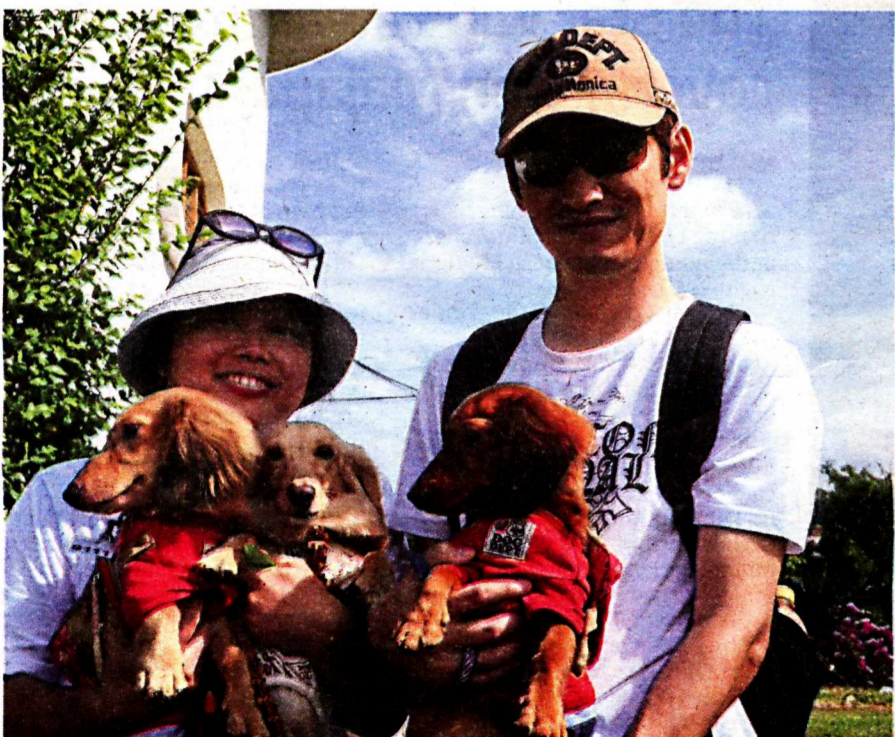
Choong Yeephng, from the organising committee's publicity team, said the dogs were examined before entering the venue to ensure they were healthy.

"There is another veterinary tent in the event grounds where owners can have their dogs further examined and treated at a fee of RM6," he said.

Choong said there had been no reported cases of heatstroke.



An adorable 10-month-old corgi named Latte at the event.



The event attracted dog owners from other states including Takahiro (right) and his wife Kazumi who came from Malacca with their miniature dachshunds.



Dogs being examined by UPM veterinary students before entering the venue.



A dog enjoying a game of hide-and-seek.



The winners for the men's+large dog category in the Dog Race.



A dog making his mark on a souvenir.



A Siberian Husky looking cute in a bib.