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THE role of universities goes beyond providing education and knowledge.

Apart from learning, teaching and conducting research, they also contribute to society by sharing and encouraging the pursuit of knowledge that may improve lives.

Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) endeavoured to do just that through its *Jom Sains Carnival* held recently at the main campus in Serdang, Selangor.

As a biennial event that began in 2016, it was initiated to stimulate and cultivate society's interest in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), which would ensure a brighter future for the younger generation and the country's economy.

This time, the carnival was a collaboration between academics at UPM's Faculty of Science, led by senior lecturer Dr Yap Wing Fen, and members of the Faculty of Science Students' Association (comprising Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics and Biology student clubs) led by Mohd Anaz Syazreil Mohd Ghause.

It also involved external organisations, such as Petrosains, Zoo Negara, the Academy of Sciences Malaysia's Young Scientist Network (YSN-ASM) and the Malaysian Nature Society (MNS).

A total of 250 first- to final-year students — most serving as facilitators while some were in the organising committee — hosted the event for schoolchildren from 60 primary and secondary schools. The children mostly came from the Klang Valley, but there were some from Perak, Terengganu, Pahang and Negri Sembilan.

Faculty of Science dean Professor Dr Mohd Basyaruddin Abdul Rahman said the carnival was the best platform for academicians and students to work together in sharing the fun of learning science.

He said this could contribute towards producing a future generation that was innovative and science-literate as the youngsters could join activities that stimulated STEM ideas.

"Studies have found that students perceive science subjects as very difficult and boring, and lack of family support also leads to a decrease in science stream enrolment.

"Having a science carnival will nurture their interest in STEM subjects. More importantly, we want to encourage parents to explore scientific activities with their children.

"We hope that with their involvement, it will trigger interest among their children to opt for science stream."

He said through the carnival, knowledge and new enrichment ideas, as well as the latest pedagogical techniques in science, could be imparted to teachers so they would make the learning and teaching of science in schools more interactive and exciting.



Schoolchildren with Universiti Putra Malaysia academics and undergraduates at the opening ceremony of the *Jom Sains Carnival* recently. The event is a super fun celebration of science, with dynamic activities and interactive learning.

PROGRAMMES

Sharing the love for science

According to Yap, besides activities at the university's experimental theatre and science labs, the carnival also featured outdoor challenges that tested the schoolchildren's practical knowledge.

There was also a science video competition, science Olympiad and interactive activities, such as frog dissection and forensic experiments based on Physics.

"This programme is capable of raising the schoolchildren's awareness about science and fulfils our responsibility towards the community," he said.

Anaz, who is Faculty of Science Students' Association president for the 2017-2018 session, said this voluntary programme could develop the undergraduates' character and soft skills.

"I had the opportunity to share the knowledge I learned in UPM with the visitors. I helped the schoolchildren to better understand scientific concepts and, thereby, nurtured their interest in STEM," he said.

This year's programme, themed Science is Our Future, received an enthusiastic response with more than 6,000 schoolchildren participating. The next UPM *Jom Sains Carnival* will be organised in 2020.



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**MOHD BASYARUDDIN
ABDUL RAHMAN**
UPM Faculty of Science dean



Mohd Basyaruddin Abdul Rahman (second from right), Yap Wing Fen (fifth from right) and Mohd Anaz Syazreil Mohd Ghause (sixth from right) guiding schoolchildren in an outdoor challenge.



Schoolchildren dissecting a frog under the supervision of a facilitator.



Four schoolchildren trying to solve the human-sized Jenga puzzle.