

IT was a showcase of equal standing when more than 100 basketball players — both abled-bodied and differently-abled — came together to vie for prizes at a wheelchair basketball competition held at Pusat Rekreasi JKKK Batu 11 in Cheras, Selangor recently.

Part of a campaign called It's OK to be U which was organised by Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) corporate communications final year students, the event was held to coincide with the Malaysia Wheelchair Basketball League (Balakong Circuit) 2019.

The competition saw the participation of professional wheelchair basketball players including the national team as well as parties from tertiary education institutions and other organisations.

To compete, participants had to form teams of three comprising at least two people with disabilities. The teams then went head-to-head in a seven minute wheelchair basketball match; using their torso and arm strength and skills to manoeuvre the wheels and ball simultaneously.

It's OK to be U Chairperson Kan Wai Wen said the main goal of the event was aligned with the efforts to achieve one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) — SDG 10, which is to reduce inequalities.

"Two out of 20 human beings are disabled.

## A show of strength and equality

Hence, we should practice inclusion in order to stop discrimination against the disabled. It does not matter if your effort is big or small, as long as it still helps to create a world where social inclusion is a norm for everyone. I hope this event will be inspirational to everyone to treat OKUs (people with disabilities) with love and equality," she said.

Clarifying the idea of equality, UTAR vice president for Student Development and Alumni Relations Professor Dr Choong Chee Keong said, "Equality does not mean that everyone should be given the same opportunity, instead, it refers to a support system that backs people up to ensure they can reach the equal level of goals and opportunities just like the rest of the society."

Choong was one of the attendees at the launching of the It's OK to be U campaign which was officiated by Malaysian Paralympic Council patron Tun Jeanne Abdullah

Also present were chairperson of the Malaysian Wheelchair Basketball Federation (MWBF) Datuk Hoh Hee Lee, Malaysian Paralympic Council secretary-general Siti Zaharah Tan Sri Abdul Khalid, secretary of MWBF Dr Ang Kean

Koo, Olympic Council Malaysia sport manager Mohd Rafee Majid, senior OKU (Orang Kelainan Upaya) staff of Beautiful Gate Foundation (BGF) Thomas Yeoh

Apart from the wheelchair basketball competition, the organisers also put up an exhibition explaining the different types of disabilities; food and game booths as well as free health check-ups; and conducted lucky draw sessions.

A representative from Imperia Institute of Technology, Chin Kian Hon commented that wheelchair basketball was taken to a whole new level at the event. "Teamwork is very important and it requires a lot of energy and great techniques because it is totally different from regular basketball. It was such an eye-opener to me and I am proud of what they do," said the 23-year-old professional basketball player.

Siti Noor Mawarnie Zulkifeli from Universiti Putra Malaysia said, "Today I had the chance to try the wheelchair basketball. That was my first experience and I truly appreciate it. Joining such competition helps people to be aware of the capabilities of the OKUs. I realised that they do some things better than an able-bodied person."



*Players in action during the wheelchair basketball competition.*

The winning team comprising Chai Khem Fei, Chin Ze Liang and Cheong Jian Ye came away champions of the wheelchair basketball competition - going home with RM1,995 in cash and merchandises. The team at second place received RM312 in cash plus accompanying merchandises while third place took home RM165 in cash plus merchandise.