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# Run for autism

**T**wo hundred and sixty participants dashed along the trails of Ladang 16 in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) recently to raised funds for autistic children.

The Autism Fun Run, organised by students from the Communication Department of the Modern Languages and Communication Faculty, was held in conjunction with National Autism Awareness Month in April.

Members of the public and the autism community, together with students and lecturers, ran a scenic 3km route filled with lush greeneries, passing by a lake and an animal farm belonging to UPM's Agriculture Faculty.

The event raised more than RM8,000 for the Autism Parents and Interventionists Association.

Communication Department senior lecturer Dr Nurul Ain Mohd Hasan said the initiative was also meant to create awareness about autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

"The public has heard of ASD, but when I spoke with some of them, like my close colleagues and friends, they don't know that there are different types of disorders in the spectrum.

"There should be effort to educate the public that autism is different. That's how we came up with the event's theme 'Know the difference, accept the uniqueness'."

She paid tribute to the 50 masters and 15 undergraduate students of the department, who had worked hard to organise the worthy cause.

Genius Kurnia's Parents and Interven-

tionists Association (PIBI) president Dr Aamir Abdullah Abdul Kareem Khadaied applauded UPM's efforts and contributions to the ASD community.

He added that society's acceptance of the autistic children's condition was crucial for their growth and development.

"Acceptance is important for these children. Through this fun run, both the public and autistic community can interact and better understand ASD. The event is indeed encouraging," he said.

After the run, Umar Hasfizal, an artistic youth who was diagnosed with autism at age two, treated the audience to a rendition of the song *Gemuruh* by Faizal Tahir.

Umar is a part-time worker at Ausome Cafe in Puchong. He is also a graduate of Selayang Community College, which provides early intervention and opportunities to autistic youths.

Dr Aamir said one of the key messages of the campaign was to convey and prove that there was hope for autistic children if they obtained early intervention and skills training.

"With effective intervention and treatment, they can become independent as they grow up. Umar is a good example," he said.

The Autism Fun Run was part of UPM's effort to promote the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

The event was in line with SDG 4, which is providing quality education, and SDG 10, which is reducing inequality within and among countries while building on the principle of "leaving no one behind".



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1. Participants warming up for the Autism Fun Run with the Jazzercise squad from the Communication Department of the Modern Languages and Communication Faculty in Universiti Putra Malaysia. 2. The crowd waiting eagerly for the flag-off. 3. Participants looking fresh and energetic as they begin their run. 4. The run takes participants along a scenic 3km trail at Ladang 16 of UPM's Agriculture Faculty. 5. Umar Hasfizal entertaining the crowd with his rendition of 'Gemuruh' by Faizal Tahir. 6. With their mission accomplished, participants take a group photo for remembrance.