

Headline : Inspiring teens to be river guardians

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## Inspiring teens to be river guardians

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**METRO NEWS**

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Hong guiding two students to measure river water velocity with a measuring tape and an orange ping pong ball.

As young people will be inheriting the planet, it is never too early to teach them about water pollution.

Forty students from SMK Damansara Damai 1 who took part in the Salcon Smart Water Programme (SSWP) at Bukit Kiara Federal Park were quick to grasp the issue.

Thirteen-year-old Rayyan Haqimie wondered what would happen if people continued to pollute the rivers.

“Would the harmful substances end up in the fish and finally in our bodies?” the youngster asked during the half-day session.

Salcon general manager Chern Meng Gaik, who helped conduct the session organised with Universiti Sains Malaysia and Water Watch Penang (WWP), replied that things would change for the better if people were more aware and could take action to stop the problem.



Rayyan sharing his thoughts with Chern at the Salcon Smart Water Programme at Bukit Kiara Federal Park.

“This is the response Salcon wants to inspire in its river and water conservation programme,” said Chern, who was further impressed when Rayyan said the programme made him interested in studying water engineering.

Salcon is a water and wastewater solutions company.

Into its 12th year, the programme has reached out to more than 50 schools and 3,000 students.

“We engage up to six schools per year.

“The sessions touch on basics such as the origins of water and highlights the crises faced due to climate change, wastage and pollution,” said Chern.

At the latest session, the students conducted hands-on experiments at a river.

They were taught how to calculate flow rates, identify aquatic life and monitor water quality.

Chern said the Sungai Penchala stream at Bukit Kiara Federal Park has been the location of choice for all SSWP activities.

At the session, WWP vice-president Hong Chern Wern, who has a doctorate in environmental management, spoke on how rivers should be given the same level of respect as living entities for the vital roles they have played in building civilisations.

Participants Kavivarthan Mannivanan, 17, and Vivica Via Makaid, 16, gave the programme a thumbs up.

Vivica said she was going to make it a point to save water in her daily life from now on.

She added that attending the programme made her realise that as lakes and seas start to dry up in other parts of the world, Malay-sians should be more careful in managing the precious resource.

Kavivarthan feels it important to change mindsets to save water.

“The best way to do this is to start with young people.

“We will be the ones who will spread the word in the future and make the environment better,” he said.

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