

Resilience shines on the catwalk

Women cancer warriors take spotlight at inspiring fashion show in KL

By JADE CHAN
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NEARLY 100 women living with or recovering from cancer took to the runway at the "Dreams Stage Show", celebrating their resilience as "cancer warrior queens".

Some strutted confidently along the runway, while others walked carefully or supported by a cane, but they all shared something in common – they were enjoying their time in the spotlight.

The event was organised by Malaysian Anti-Drug Association (Pemadam), Malaysia Chinese Assembly Hall (MCAH) and non-governmental organisation Tong Xin Shan Yuan Welfare Association.

It was held in collaboration with National Cancer Society of Malaysia (NCSM) to benefit its Pink Unity peer support group.

The group is run by women cancer survivors for the benefit of other women cancer patients and survivors.

"The fashion show celebrates these brave women's resilience and courage, as they learn how to manage their diagnosis," said Tong Xin Shan Yuan vice-president Roy Pheh.

"The event allows them to have a moment of happiness as a 'queen for a day' as they enjoy their time in the spotlight as well as the pampering in the lead-up to the catwalk," he added.

For their moment in the spotlight, the women received full makeovers, including professional styling with makeup,



Azlin (centre) receiving a token of appreciation from the organisers. With her are (from left) Mahani, Dr Saunthari, Oh and Chai. — Photos: LOW LAY PHON/The Star

wigs and outfits, as well as personal coaching on stage presence.

"We were fortunate to receive over RM2mil sponsorship in kind for the event, including products and event hall," Pheh said of the event that was pulled off in less than two months.

"We were assisted by over 150 volunteers who helped with hair and makeup services, catwalk training and other behind-the-scenes arrangements."

Pheh added that 96 women aged between 35 and 85 took to the catwalk.

While the majority were diagnosed with breast cancer, others had leukaemia, lymphoma or cancer of the colon, ovaries or thyroid glands.

The show held at Confetti KL in Mines 2, Seri Kembangan in Selangor, saw some 800 attendees comprising friends and families of participants as well as corporate and community leaders.

It featured outfits by seven local designers as well as students from Universiti Teknologi Mara's Faculty of Art and Design.

Guest-of-honour Datin Seri Azlin Hezri, wife of Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad, said it was inspiring to hear the women's journeys and see them shine on stage – even as some fought to walk through their pain.

Also present at the event were MCAH president Datuk Seri Dr KK Chai, Pink Unity president Mahani Kassim, NCSM president Datuk Dr Saunthari Somasundaram, Pemadam's Women, Family and Cure Bureau chairman Datuk Jamelah A. Bakar, Gaga Hair chief operating officer Friday Chua, Tong Xin Shan Yuan president Niko Kenz Ho and event organising chairman Sheila Oh.

Among the cancer survivors who participated were Vimala Thevi Ganesan and Susan Fong.

Vimala Thevi, a two-time breast cancer survivor, said she was honoured to be selected as a participant.

"The organisers were kind enough to give us a stage to be 'queens for a day' and the sponsors were kind enough to sponsor or loan us shoes and clothes," she said.

"It was great to be pampered



Fong, showing off a pantsuit with matching handbag from Lady B.

throughout the event from the rehearsals to fitting sessions to hair and makeup styling," she added.

The 46-year-old legal secretary, who wore a shiny creation by Gilbert Headhunter, said she was excited about making the designer proud by showcasing his work on the runway.

The mother-of-two also said she personally encouraged family and friends to go for cancer screenings.

Vimala Thevi's mother died after her third cancer diagnosis, while her now teenage son had leukaemia at the age of five.

Fong, who has participated in a few similar charity fashion shows, said "Dreams Stage Show" was her biggest to date based on the number of participants.

"I wore an all-white ensemble, including a pantsuit with matching handbag by Lady B, paired with open-toed heels," she said, adding that she was lucky enough to be able to take everything home after the event.

"I make an effort to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to stay active ever since my breast cancer diagnosis 14 years ago," said Fong.

"I'm also a volunteer and dance performer at Pink Unity," she said.

The 64-year-old also does artwork on jute bags and T-shirts, with proceeds from their sales channelled back to charity.

She first picked up art as part of her therapy and did charity work as her way of giving back to society.

Vimala Thevi, a two-time breast cancer survivor, striking a pose in a shiny design by Gilbert Headhunter.

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By DAVID CHANG

WALK into any shopping mall or pasar malam in Malaysia today, and chances are you'll spot someone with a smart-watch on their wrist or a fitness ring on their finger.

Wearable health gadgets have gone from high-tech luxuries to everyday items.

Whether it's counting steps, tracking heart rates or monitoring sleep, these devices are changing the way we manage our health.

In Malaysia, more people are getting health-conscious and embracing digital tools.

Wearables can be great helpers, but only if we use them the right way.

Buying one is just the start.

The real benefits come when we pay attention to the data they give us and make changes based on those insights.

In real time

One of the biggest advantages of wearables is real-time monitoring.

Traditional health check-ups give you only a brief snapshot.

But wearables track your vitals around the clock, including heart rate, steps, sleep and more.

It's like having a mini health assistant with you 24/7.

Some devices can even detect early warning signs.

For example, smartwatches with ECG (electrocardiogram) features can flag irregular heart rhythms, which may signal conditions like atrial fibrillation.

If caught early, you can seek help before things get worse.

For people with chronic diseases like diabetes or high blood pressure, these devices are even more useful.

Continuous glucose monitors allow users to check blood sugar levels in real time and adjust their meals or medication right away.

It puts you in control and can reduce unnecessary hospital visits.

Encouraging healthy habits

Besides disease management, wearables are also great at

Maximising wearables for health

With wearable devices becoming increasingly common, we should take advantage of their monitoring to better our health.

building good habits.

Most come with reminders to move, drink water or get some rest.

You can track your steps, calories and sleep hours.

Seeing your progress, whether it's a goal reached or a "badge earned", can keep you motivated.

Some people even form small groups to compete in step challenges.

A little friendly competition helps keep everyone moving.

Over time, this creates a more active and healthy lifestyle.

Doctors also benefit.

Wearables offer a fuller picture of your health between clinic visits.

This can lead to better treatment plans if you provide your doctor with this information.

On a bigger scale, data from wearables help researchers understand public health trends better too.

Making it work for you

To get the most out of your wearable device, start by picking the right one based on your health goals.

If you want to improve your sleep, consider a device that's known for accurate sleep tracking.

If your focus is on fitness or heart health, a smartwatch with



need to act on the data it provides.

If your sleep score is low, try adjusting your bedtime routine or sleep environment.

If the app shows you've been inactive for hours, take short walking breaks.

Set small, realistic goals that are specific and trackable, and review your progress regularly to stay motivated.

It's also important to share relevant health data with your doctor.

Wearables are great tools, but they don't replace professional medical advice.

By discussing your wearable data, like heart rate trends or sleep quality, your doctor can make more informed decisions about your care.

Always seek medical help if you notice any worrying signs.

Lastly, don't forget about data privacy.

Check your device's privacy settings and be clear on what information is being collected and shared.

Wear your device as instructed to get the most accurate readings.

And keep in mind, while wearables are helpful for general

The more consistently you wear your wearable device, the more accurate the data it collects will be – and don't forget to act on it to form healthier habits!
– AFP

fitness and heart rate features might be more suitable.

Make sure it's comfortable to wear, easy to use, and compatible with your phone and any health apps you already use.

Once you've chosen a device, make it a habit to wear it every day.

The more consistently you wear it, the more accurate and useful the data will be.

Take some time to explore the companion app to understand what each metric means and how your daily habits affect your health numbers.

But wearing the device alone isn't enough, you

wellness, they're not meant to replace clinical-grade medical equipment.

Take charge

Wearable health tech can be a powerful tool in your wellness journey.

For Malaysians, it's a chance to take charge of your own health.

But owning a device isn't enough.

What matters most is how you use the information it gives you.

By making smart choices, staying consistent and working closely with your doctor, you can turn those numbers on your screen into real, long-term health benefits.

As we move towards a more digital Malaysia, these small devices might just be your best ally to a healthier, more active life.

David Chang is a pharmacist.

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Medically supervised weight management

Supervised weight management is essential for safe and sustainable results. PICTURE CREDIT: FREEPIK

A MULTIDISCIPLINARY, medically supervised approach to weight management will result in more effective outcomes that can be sustained in the long term. This is especially true for individuals with chronic conditions or mobility challenges.

According to the 2024 National Health and Morbidity Survey (NHMS), over half of Malaysian adults (52.1 per cent) experience abdominal obesity — a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases like heart disease, stroke and diabetes.

Among adolescents, only 5.2 per cent meet daily vegetable intake recommendations, while poor dietary habits and sedentary lifestyles remain widespread.

Obesity is a chronic medical condition that often hides other risks, says Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre (BTMC) consultant internal medicine physician Dr Nurul Nadiah Mohd Iqbal.

"When patients attempt drastic changes without understanding their health baseline, they can do more harm than good."

That is why supervised weight management, which considers each patient's medical profile, nutritional needs and physical condition, is essen-

tial for safe and sustainable results.

Medical supervision ensures that underlying health issues are identified and accounted for before patients embark on a weight loss programme.

For example, patients with prediabetes may require a different dietary strategy than those with thyroid conditions.

"We begin with comprehensive blood tests and physical assessments to identify silent risk factors," explains Dr Nurul Nadiah.

These insights guide every step of the patient's personalised treatment plan, ensuring safer and more effective outcomes.

DIFFERENT ROADS TO WEIGHT MANAGEMENT

Every patient's journey is different, adds Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre consultant internal medicine Dr Tamilvani Arumugam.

"When medications are involved, they must be closely monitored to ensure effectiveness and to avoid side effects like fatigue, dehydration or nutrient imbalances."

Medical supervision plays a key role in reducing dropout rates, she adds, as ongoing follow-

ups help patients sustain their efforts and address setbacks early.

When it comes to diet, rather than placing patients on strict or unfamiliar

diets, it's better to work with what they already know and love, explains Bukit Tinggi Medical Centre senior dietitian Rama Parahakaran.

"Food is cultural and emotional. We are not here to take that away; we help patients understand how to enjoy food more mindfully."

For instance, modifying a meal like nasi lemak might involve adjusting portion size, swapping coconut rice for a smaller portion of brown rice, or replacing fried anchovies with grilled chicken. Rather than avoiding favourite dishes, the goal is to train patients to make healthier choices consistently.

Obesity is a chronic medical condition that often hides other risks.

Dr Nurul Nadiah Mohd Iqbal



Dr Nurul Nadiah Mohd Iqbal. PICTURE CREDIT: BTMC



Dr Tamilvani Arumugam. PICTURE CREDIT: BTMC



Modifying a meal like nasi lemak might involve adjusting portion size, swapping coconut rice for a smaller portion of brown rice or replacing fried anchovies with grilled chicken. PICTURE CREDIT: FREEPIK

This also includes teaching them how to read food labels, plan balanced meals, manage cravings and eat at regular intervals to prevent binge-eating behaviours.

GET MOVING

Physical activity is also a key part of weight management, but only when done safely.

Many patients with obesity experience knee pain, poor posture or balance issues.

Physiotherapists can carry out personalised strength and mobility assessments using artificial intelligence-assisted tools, allowing for precise and measurable progress.

"The goal is not just to increase activity, it is to rebuild function in a way that respects the patient's current limitations," says David Health Solutions (Asia) Sdn Bhd's rehabilitation centre physiotherapist and general manager Kiran Kaur.

Patients should be guided through movements like spinal stabilisation or hip and shoulder exercises that ease joint strain while improving control and endurance.

These plans are adapted from session to session, allowing for gradual progression.

When someone who used to avoid stairs or long walks can eventually manage daily tasks without pain, that is a meaningful step forward, not just physically, but emotionally too.

While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to obesity, an integrated approach built on clinical care, cultural sensitivity and ongoing assessment can offer individuals a more realistic and sustainable path toward better health. meera@nst.com.my



CAP urges **swift ban** on vape products

➤ Consumer group says delaying Cabinet action risks more youths getting hooked, calls on ministry to set clear deadline

■ BY **T.C. KHOR**
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PETALING JAYA: The Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) has urged the government not to delay a nationwide ban on vape products, stressing that public health must take precedence over industry concerns.

This follows Health Minister Datuk Seri Dr Dzulkefly Ahmad's announcement on Aug 24 that a memorandum on banning vaping and e-cigarettes will be presented to the Cabinet by the end of the year.

CAP senior education officer and anti-smoking activist NV Subbarow said while the assurance that "it is not about if we will ban but when we will ban" may signal progress, it also reflects unnecessary hesitation.

"The ministry should not protect the vape industry. The health of vapers, especially young people, is more important than the industry," he told *theSun*.

He dismissed the ministry's claim that a sudden ban could expose the government to legal risks, calling it unfounded.

"We have the Attorney-General's

Chambers which drafted the law. When a few states already banned vape without fear or favour, no one talked about legal issues. Why is the ministry worried now?" he asked.

Subbarow added that Malaysia's youth cannot afford to wait until the end of the year for yet another Cabinet discussion.

"Every month wasted means more students and young people getting hooked on this dangerous product. The ministry must act firmly and swiftly, not play games with words."

On Aug 21, Dzulkefly told reporters that the government "cannot suddenly ban vape" due to potential legal challenges, saying regulations under the Control of Smoking Products for Public Health Act 2024 had created a "legitimate expectation" for the industry to

continue operating.

The issue has been repeatedly discussed at Cabinet level but the ministry has yet to commit to a fixed timeline.

"When Johor, Kelantan and Terengganu banned vape, no one raised legal issues. They acted decisively because public health was the priority," Subbarow said.

He also questioned whether federal authorities were adopting a wait-and-see approach while other countries have already banned vaping products containing dangerous substances, saying the ministry appeared to be "giving excuses every time".

"Our minister should learn from Singapore. Its prime minister raised the vape issue during his National Day speech."

Subbarow said the debate should

focus not on protecting industry players who profit from addiction, but on safeguarding children, students and young adults from long-term harm.

He added that CAP has raised the issue for years and remains frustrated by the lack of urgency.

"Will there be a ban? If so, when? Malaysians deserve more than vague promises and delays. The government must stop hiding behind excuses and put health first."

He urged the ministry to set a clear deadline and publish a transparent roadmap towards a complete ban.

"If the ministry cannot act decisively, it is failing in its duty to protect the public. It is not about politics or legal theories. It is about the health and future of our young people."



AWAS!

Bahaya Menggunakan Fon Telinga Semasa Tidur



PADA zaman moden ini, penggunaan fon telinga telah menjadi kebiasaan dalam kalangan masyarakat. Ramai orang menggunakannya untuk mendengar muzik dan menonton video. Colongan muda terutamanya sering dilihat menggunakan fon telinga dalam pelbagai situasi seperti ketika bekerja, berjoging, atau untuk menenangkan fikiran sebelum tidur.

Walaupun kelihatan seperti tabiat menggunakan fon telinga terutamanya semasa tidur sebenarnya boleh mendatangkan pelbagai kesan buruk terhadap kesihatan.

Penggunaan fon telinga dalam tempoh yang panjang, termasuk semasa tidur, boleh merosakkan pendengaran. Selain itu, bunyi yang berterusan dan terlalu kuat boleh merosakkan sel-sel halus di dalam telinga. Ini boleh menyebabkan masalah pendengaran seperti telinga berdengung (tinnitus) atau kehilangan pendengaran secara beransur-ansur. Masalah ini sering tidak disedari pada peringkat awal dan hanya disedari apabila ia sudah menjadi serius.

Selain itu, penggunaan fon telinga semasa tidur juga boleh mengakibatkan jangkitan pada telinga. Telinga yang tertutup dalam jangka masa yang lama akan menjadi lembap dan panas, menjadikannya tempat yang sesuai untuk pembiakan bakteria. Sekiranya fon telinga tidak dibersihkan dengan kerap, fon telinga tersebut boleh menjadi punca penyebaran kuman dan menyebabkan jangkitan seperti radang pada saluran telinga atau jangkitan telinga tengah. Telinga individu yang terkena dan mengeluarkan cecair dari telinga.

Penggunaan fon telinga ketika tidur boleh mengganggu kualiti tidur. Walaupun sesetengah individu merasakan muzik membantu mereka tidur, hakikatnya bunyi yang berterusan boleh mengganggu otak daripada mencapai fasa tidur nyenyak. Ini menyebabkan seseorang itu mudah terjaga dan mengalami keletihan pada keesokan harinya.

Selain risiko dalaman, penggunaan fon telinga juga boleh mendatangkan bahaya luaran seperti mengurangkan tahap kewaspadaan terhadap persekitaran, mendengar lagu dengan menggunakan fon telinga akan membuatkan individu kurang peka terhadap perkara yang

terjadi di sekelilingnya, hal ini amat membahayakan sekiranya berlaku perkara yang tidak diingini berlaku.

Lebih membimbangkan, terdapat kes di mana fon telinga, terutamanya jenis berwayar, boleh menyebabkan kemalangan seperti tercekik atau terbelit pada leher. Risiko ini lebih tinggi jika pengguna tidur dalam keadaan lasak atau tidak sedar akan kedudukan tubuh mereka semasa tidur.

Walaupun penggunaan fon telinga pada waktu lain juga kita haruslah berhati-hati dengan menghadkan penggunaannya seperti menetapkan penggunaan fon telinga tidak melebihi 90 minit, mengawal tahap bunyi, meminimumkan masa penggunaan dalam sehari.

Kesimpulannya, walaupun penggunaan fon telinga semasa tidur mungkin kelihatan tidak berbahaya, ia sebenarnya membawa pelbagai risiko terhadap kesihatan fizikal dan kualiti tidur. Oleh itu, adalah penting untuk kita mengelakkan tabiat ini dan memilih kaedah lain yang lebih selamat untuk menenangkan diri sebelum tidur, seperti membaca buku atau mendengar muzik daripada pembesar suara pada volume yang rendah.

SARAWAK

Nine eateries hauled up for various offences in Sibü

NINE eateries along Jalan Pedada in Sibü town, Sarawak, were hauled up for various offences including poor hygiene, dumping foodwaste into drains, operating without a valid licence, using damaged kitchen utensils and storing expired food.

The inspection was carried out by Sibü Municipal Council (SMC) public health, environment and municipal services committee.

SMC councillor and the committee's deputy chairman Yiing Sy Huat said two outlets received cleanliness notices after failing to meet minimum hygiene standards.

Three premises were compounded for discarding food waste into drains while one

outlet was penalised for operating without proper licensing approval.

"In another case, the local council also confiscated plastic straws from a premises in line with the policy to reduce the use of single-use plastics," said Yiing.

He said four eateries were

found using worn-out, chipped or cracked kitchen utensils, while some were also caught storing expired food in refrigerators.

Two eateries were compounded for placing chairs and tables on the pavement without a permit.

Another one was given verbal warning for preparing food and setting up tables in a public area without the local council's approval.

Also present at the inspection was SMC councillor and the committee chairman Jenny Ting.
— By **ANDY CHUA**