

A hot challenge for CEOs

The El Niño heat could not deter the head honchos of corporations from putting on their trainers and running for a good cause.

The Edge Kuala Lumpur Rat Race 2016 saw 49 CEOs run the 1.5km circuit in the middle of Kuala Lumpur in a scorching 35°C.

Before the race, Matrix Concepts Holdings Bhd director Datuk Lim Kiu Hock was genuinely worried about running in the blistering heat. A Rat Race first-timer, he had no idea what to expect but he was glad to participate in the race.

"I am not hoping to finish first," he remarked. "I just want to participate and support the cause."

As corporations capitalise on society at large to build their financial empires, they should return the favour, he said, adding that companies that expend energy on charitable activities possess a sense of selflessness.

"It shows that companies have humanitarian values. It is not just about making money. It is also about giving profits back to society. Corporate Malaysia asks society for money, so it has to give back," Lim commented.

The CEO's race saw both young and old corporate heads vying for the top title.

After the race was flagged off by Eco World Development Group Bhd president and CEO Datuk Chang Kim Wah at 3.30pm, Microlink Solutions Bhd CEO Chia Yong Wei reached the finish line at the Malaysia Tourism Centre (MaTiC) in six minutes.

"It was very hot but it was great fun," Chia, 39, said, adding that he was proud to have finished first. "It was very competitive, so I had to try my hardest."

Maybank director Udaishankar Raman, who was also with Chia in the 100Plus booth, said he had fun but it was challenging to run in the heat.

Chia said although Udaishankar was far behind, he had his eyes on him. "Harimau, I'm coming," he told Udaishankar, who laughed.

Matching the enthusiasm of the runners in the CEO's category were their staff, cheering on their leaders from the entrance of MaTiC.

Proving that they were more than just cogs in a machine, the staff of the various corporations braved the heat and waited until their CEOs had completed the race. Not only that, they stayed on to cheer their colleagues who ran the 4km team race.

DKSH Malaysia Sdn Bhd head of country management Nicholas McLaren clinched the second spot in the CEO's male category, clocking 6 minutes and 35 seconds.

He said he intends to win the fastest male CEO title next year. "I like to make grand promises and deliver on them," he added.

McLaren, who has lived in Singapore and Malaysia over the past seven years, said although he was used to the equatorial heat in both countries, running the Rat Race was challenging.

"I don't really run in the afternoon at 3.30pm," he remarked.

Maxis Bhd head of network Abdul Karim Ali, who came in third, said he

was exhausted but felt good about it. "At least, I have covered my exercise quota for the week," he laughed.

He said although he frequently runs mid to long distances, the short CEO's race was rather challenging. "Usually, in a long-distance run, the first 5km is just warming up. But in this race, I had to sprint right from the beginning. It was not easy."

The 16th Rat Race proved to be a sweet moment for Ireka Corp Bhd group deputy managing director Monica Lai in the female CEO's category. She aced it, clocking 8 minutes and 21 seconds. Last year, she was the first runner-up.

"I came into the race trying to beat my own time," she said. "And I did it. I finished the race 25 seconds faster and in this heat too. I am really happy."

Lai said Ireka had participated in the Rat Race for the past seven years and looks forward to it every year.

First runner-up and Rat Race first-timer, Nur Suhaila Saad of Boustead Heavy Industries Corp Bhd, said she had a blast. "I think it is a very good charity run. I had heard a lot about the race before but I had the chance to participate in it only this year."

Nur said she did not feel any pressure running in the CEO's category and that it was heartening to see the other female CEOs sweating it out for charity.

"Most of them were relaxed and they were quite sporting. Some of them were even wearing make-up, so it was really fun. I got to see a different side of them," she smiled. **E**



**Monica Lai,
Ireka**