

# Racing with dragons

## Thai men's and women's teams win three gold medals

**Dateline: Penang**

**A** TEAM of women rowers from Boston and a team of local rowers comprising 13 gutsy breast cancer survivors were among the 28 teams which took part in the 30th Penang International Dragon Boat Festival 2009 at the Teluk Bahang Dam last weekend.

The site was buzzing with activity as thousands including tourists turned up to support their teams. Stalls selling drinks, food and T-shirts were well-patronised, and loud music added to the merriment.

And the race was not the only attraction at the dam. There were also a chingay performance, a lion dance and kite-flying to keep the crowd entertained. The beautiful and colourful kites seen flying in a synchronised manner were definitely a sight to behold.

Battling for honours in the two-day festival were teams from the United States, China, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

The five categories for the local races held on Saturday were the Malaysia Junior Open Race, Malaysia Mixed Race, Penang Open Race, Malaysia Club Open Race and Malaysia Government Inter-Department Open Race.

On the second day, the race saw the international teams paddling for glory in four categories — Penang International Mixed Race, Junior, Open and Women's Open.

Participating for the first time was a women's team from Boston known as the Double Bacon Cheese Burger USA. Its team leader, Nikki Pruksakasemsuk, said this was the first time they were taking part in a dragon boat race competition in Asia. "Winning or losing is not an issue, what is important is enjoying ourselves," she added.

The team came in fifth in the women's race category.

A total of 13 gutsy breast cancer survivors from Kuala Lumpur once again took part in the Penang International Women's race to promote breast cancer awareness. They first took part in 2005.

Its team captain, Wong Mee Yee, said their theme this year was 'In Support of Strength, Courage and Change'. "Our participation is not about winning but more about creating awareness of breast cancer," she said.

The team secured fourth placing in the heats but failed to qualify for the semi-finals.

Highlight of the first day was the Penang Open Race which saw Pacific West Dragon Boat Club



**Courageous challengers:** A team comprising breast cancer survivors taking part in the annual dragon boat races really stood out during the day.

(A) crowned local champion with a time of 2'11.43.

Coming in a distant second was Penang Island Paddlez Club (A) and Penang Forward Sports Club finished third.

Another dragon boat team that stole the show was Chung Ling High School which reigned supreme in the Malaysia Junior Open Race.

The second place went to SMJK Chung Hwa Confucian (Pacific West) and the third placing went to SXI-Penang Paddlez Club (B).

The Chung Ling team also bagged a gold for the Penang International Junior Race.

The penultimate competition of the day was another exciting affair with both Duyong Club and Police di-Raja Malaysia (PDRM) fighting tooth and nail for the Malaysia Government Inter-Department Open Race title.

In the end, it was Duyong Club which gained the upper hand with PDRM settling for the second placing and MIMET Dragonboat Club claiming the third spot.

During the launch of the event on the first day, the SJK (C) Wen Khai's 24-Season Chinese Drum Troupe put on a performance to greet the participants.

Wushu exponent Mohd Dhamirilee Hadi Lee's swift movements and his fast fist sparring techniques also had the participants in awe.

The event was launched by Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng and the prizes for the five local categories were presented by Yang di-Pertua Negri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas.

The Penang International Dragon Boat Festival chairman Danny Law Heng Kiang said the best teams from the Penang Open Race would be chosen to take part in the Asian Games to be held at Guangzhou China next year.

As for the international categories, Thailand clinched three gold medals for the Mixed, Women and Open Races.

The second place for the Mixed race went to German Dragon Singapore (A) and the third place went to Safra Dragonboat Club, Singapore.

A group of fun and cool women from Philippines clinched the second spot in the women's race.

They called themselves Boracay Bumshells. The German Dragons Singapore (A) came out third.

The Open Race saw Pacific West Dragon Club (A) receiving the silver medal and the Navy men from Lumut known as Duyong Club winning the bronze medal.

As for the Penang International Junior Race, Chung Ling High School (A) came out first followed by SMJK Chung Hwa Confucian (Pacific West- A) and the third placing went to Chung Ling High School (B).