

# Lifting hopes in cancer fight

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The smile on the faces of some 500 cancer survivors reflected the hope and support they felt when 5,000 people gathered to take part in the 16-hour Relay For Life Kuala Lumpur 2009 yesterday.

But those smiles turned to tears when the Lumanaria ceremony began as dusk settled on the National Sports Council's training stadium.

The Lumanaria, small bags with tea light candles inside, were lit to remember those who did not survive the disease.

The tears flowed freely, too, when poems and dedications were read over the public address system.

Organised by the National Cancer Society Malaysia (NCSM), the first lap of the relay was flagged off by RFL KL 2009 chairman and honorary adviser Datuk Zuraidah Atan at 6pm. It will end at 10am today.

Zuraidah was in an upbeat mood, thanks to the strong support for the relay from people and organisations of various backgrounds.

True to the spirit of RFL KL, the track was never empty, at any one time there was always someone on the track during the entire event.

Some of the main sponsors for the



event were the New Straits Times Press, Astro, Fiberail, Celcom and Nestle.

Women, Family and Community Development Minister Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil also made a brief appearance to give her support to the cancer survivors.

"The survivors are our VIPs. With our tagline 'Celebrate. Remember. Fight Back!', RFL KL 2009 is in essence a celebration of survivors, and a way for all of us who have been touched by cancer to remem-

ber those who have passed away and to continue to fight for a cure for the disease," said Zuraidah.

She added that funds raised from RFL KL 2009 would be channelled towards upgrading the NCSM's Cancer Treatment Centre located at Tung Shin Hospital, where NCSM provides radiotherapy treatment for cancer patients at highly subsidised rates.

NCSM also provides medical screening for cancer, and Zuraidah urged people to take advantage of

Cancer survivors making their way around the National Sports Council training stadium during the 16-hour Relay For Life 2009 yesterday. (Inset) US ambassador to Malaysia James R. Keith, a cancer survivor, was there to render support.

the services.

Among the survivors was United States ambassador to Malaysia James R. Keith, who said early detection had saved his life.

"I was diagnosed with a skin cancer, but I caught it early last year and this has made a lot of difference. This is why early detection is very important," he said, adding that those with cancer had to be strong in dealing with their illness.