



PRESS RELEASE

PENANG CHANNEL CHALLENGE "PADDLE FOR COURAGE, STRENGTH AND CHANGE"

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TANJONG CITY MARINA, PENANG**

BREAST CANCER SURVIVORS CHALLENGE THEMSELVES

A group of gutsy breast cancer survivors paddled across the 3.8 kilometer channel from Bagan Ajam R&R, Butterworth to Tanjong City Marina in Penang carrying one message, "There can be life after breast cancer." The theme for the Penang Channel Challenge was *Paddle for Courage, Strength and Change*.

Present at the event was Yang Berhormat Tuan Danny Law Heng Kiang, Chairman of the Penang State Tourism Development, Culture, Arts and Heritage, representing Yang Amat Berhormat Tuan Lim Guan Eng, the Chief Minister of Penang.

Being Malaysia's first team of dragon boat paddlers consisting of breast cancer survivors, these women took on the brave attempt of crossing the rough waters of the sea and proving to the world that they are capable of facing the roughest of journey in life. This endeavour is symbolic and comparable to each of their personal breast cancer battle, its diagnosis, treatment and recovery. These women, also known as the Pink Challengers are role models for others who are recently diagnosed and experiencing the breast cancer battle.

The staff of the Royal Australian Air Force showed their support and encouragement by paddling alongside the Pink Challengers.

Why dragon boat paddling? Whilst the physical action of paddling builds up body strength and flexibility of the arms, it is also a way of preventing lymphoedema or swelling of the arm, which can occur in women as a side effect of breast cancer treatment. Philosophically, the dragon signifies the breast cancer that one experiences. The diagnosis of breast cancer can be synonymous to the sudden appearance of the deadly dragon creeping out from the darkness into the life of a woman threatening to kill her. For many survivors, the paddling action where the team uses all its strength and might in unison, symbolizes the killing of the deadly dragon. For some survivors, the meaning changes to riding the dragon. Having survived the despair and suffering of the breast cancer, it is eventually considered a companion. Hence the paddling movement creates an ambience of riding with the companion for life, that is, the dragon or breast cancer. 'Being in the same boat' together creates a feeling of camaraderie and mutual support.

Ms Ranjit Kaur, a breast cancer survivor and President of Breast Cancer Welfare Association, who was also the drummer for this challenge stated that "This event is significant to us as we take on the waves of the sea and pushing through the resistance, thus, being symbolic to the breast cancer battle that each member of our team has experienced through our diagnosis, treatment and recovery of breast cancer".



This extraordinary challenge aimed to demonstrate to the public that early detection and timely treatment of breast cancer can save one's life. As stated in the speech by YAB Tuan Lim Guan Eng "If everyone is vigilant, breast cancer will not be a dreadful disease anymore. Health care is the responsibility of every individual". He added that "The Pink Challengers have won not only today's special race with themselves, but also the race of their life".

Also present to lend support to the event was the representative of the Australian High Commissioner to Malaysia, Ms Majell Hind.

The Pink Challengers are all out to change the perception and attitude of the public regarding breast cancer. An outdoor, strenuous and challenging sport such as dragon boat paddling can make a good re-education tool for the public that life after breast cancer can be even more active than normal.

Their arrival at Tanjung City Marina was greeted by the honks of Harley Owners Group (HOG) Malaysia Chapter and other bikers from the Biking Community.

To mark the end of the Penang Channel Challenge, the Pink Challengers conducted the "flowers-on-the-water" ceremony in memory of others like themselves. At the end of this challenging activity, a moment of silence was acknowledged and the team threw flowers on the water in memory of women all over the world who fought a brave battle till the end and those who are currently fighting the breast cancer battle today.

The entire team of Pink Challengers who braved the Penang Channel Challenge consisted of 15 breast cancer survivors including the paddlers and a drummer. The sweep was Encik Azhari Hussen the official coach of the team.

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