

# Running for life

> Raising awareness on the need for organ donation to save lives



Nearly 4,000 people thronged Dataran Merdeka yesterday.

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**KUALA LUMPUR:** The pleasant green of Dataran Merdeka took on hazy hues yesterday when nearly 4,000 runners pounded the surrounding roads to raise awareness on organ donation for World Kidney Day this year.

Themed "Donate - Kidneys for Life - Receive", this year's celebrations focused on the life-saving aspect of organ donation, and how the simple act can save a life.

National Kidney Foundation (NKF) chief executive officer Chua Hong Wee yesterday said Malaysians have in recent years opened up to the once-taboo idea of organ donation.

"NKF hopes that one day, the dependency on dialysis machines will be reduced as more organ donors come forward.

"Organ donation gives people another chance to live again, which is why we are trying to raise



World Kidney Day run winner Mohd Jiron Riduan receiving his prize from Muhyiddin.

more awareness on the topic and encourage more people to sign up as organ pledgers," he said.

At the National Transplant Centre, there are 15,078 people in line for organs; of that number, 15,055 are waiting for kidneys.

There have been 361 successful organ donations since 1997, with 47 this year alone - a sign of the growing awareness of the importance of organ donation.

Kidney recipient Lee Chen Hoe, who snagged third place in his category (transplant patients and organ donors) for the World Kidney Run, said the kidney he received 16 years ago has given him a new lease of life.

"I have to watch my diet and exercise a lot, but so far, it's been good," the jovial 54-year-old told *theSun* yesterday.

Lee, who suffered complete kidney failure, went through dialysis four times a day or five years of before he received a kidney.

Don Schultz and Lauren Lim, who won prizes for their slogans, "Healthy Kidneys for Life", and "I Love My Kidneys," said many Malaysians were still not aware

of the need for organ donors.

"We saw the notice on the website encouraging teams to wear slogans on their running shirts, so we printed out some slogans and pinned them on," Schultz said.

"This kind of event is very important to raise public awareness as people in need may not have the right connections to get help while those who want to help may not know where to start."

The couple signed up as organ pledgers yesterday along with 170 others.

World Kidney Day, observed annually on March 8, aims to raise awareness on the importance of kidneys for overall health, and to reduce kidney disease worldwide.

The event was officiated by Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin and Health Minister Datuk Seri Liow Tiong Lai.

Liow said more Malaysians have been diagnosed with non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and high blood pressure in recent years, and urged people to maintain a healthy lifestyle in order to prevent kidney disease.