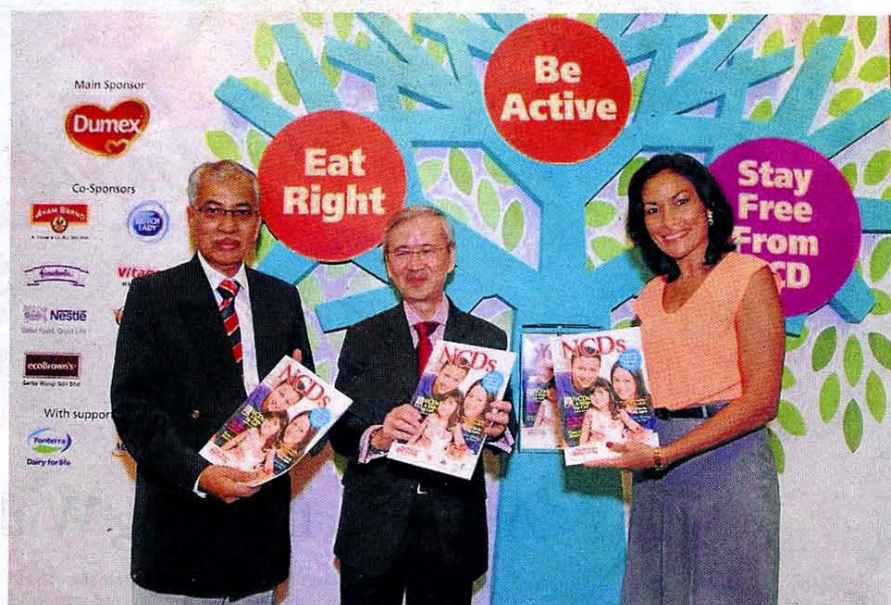




**Good to know:** Visitors learning how to read food labels via NMM giant food mock-up at the 'Reading Food Labels Corner'.



**Good read:** (From left) Malaysian Association of the Study of Obesity president Prof Dr Mohd Ismail, Dr Tee and Malaysian Dietitians' Association president Indra Balaratnam launching NMM 2013's main publication 'Prevent NCDs'.

# Focus on healthy diet

Mini-carnivals in suburbs part of Nutrition Month 2013

**T**HE nation's premier nutrition education programme, Nutrition Month Malaysia (NMM), was held for the 11th consecutive year with the theme 'Eat Right, Be Active: Stay Free From Diet-Related Diseases' recently.

NMM National Steering Committee chairman Dr Tee E Siong said the focus this year was to promote greater awareness on the importance of healthy eating and active living in order to reduce the prevalence of diet-related chronic diseases such as obesity, diabetes, heart disease and cancers amongst Malaysians.

In his speech, Dr Tee revealed worrying statistics from the National Health and Morbidity Survey 2011.

- Obesity has increased about three-fold, from 4.4% in 1996 to 15.1% in 2011, and this puts the number of obese Malaysians at about 2.5 million people.

- Diabetes in Malaysia has also increased from 11.6% in 2006 to 15.2% in 2011, and this accounts for about 2.6 million adults.

- Hypertension remains high at 35.1%, which is about 5.8 million Malaysians, and an estimated 32.7%, or 6.2 million Malaysians, are diagnosed with hypercholesterolaemia.

"It is disturbing when we think of the future and how these figures are projected to continue increasing," said Dr Tee, adding that the rise in these non-communicable diseases (NCDs) could be attributed to an unhealthy diet and lifestyle.

The NMM 2013 commenced with the recent launch of the Nutri-Fun Land Carnival, an educational yet fun area where families learnt about non-communicable diseases (NCDs), ways to prevent NCDs, and discovered more about the Food Pyramid and ways to choose healthier foods and jumpstart their fitness regimes.

The two-day carnival also showcased free nutrition screenings (body mass index, blood pressure, blood cholesterol, blood glucose and body fat), and provided free dietary advice by trained professionals besides other fun activities and games by the sponsors.



**Fun time:** Children enjoying the 'Dance For A Healthier Life' interactive activity at Zone 9: Kids' Nutri-Active Zone.

During the carnival, two new publications were distributed to the public. The first was NMM's annual publication (*Prevent NCDs - Staying Free From Diet-Related Diseases*), which focused on identifying NCDs and its risk factors.

It also included the 10 key messages on the prevention of NCDs and many useful tips for prevention. There were many informative articles by experts in their specific fields and real-life stories, which are aimed at inspiring readers to start living healthily.

The second NMM publication was a cookbook for children (*My Cookbook with Bread*), which was a collaborative effort with Gardenia Bakeries (KL) Sdn Bhd that is aimed at encouraging children to eat healthily by starting to prepare their own meals from young.

Several outreach activities have been lined up in conjunction with NMM 2013. They include a mini Nutri-Fun Land Community Carnival organised in collaboration with local authorities such as the Subang Jaya Municipal Council (MPSJ) to further reach out to the community in sub-urban areas. The mini-carnival will be an educational, fun-filled and interactive event for the entire family. It will include free nutrition screening covering body mass index and body fat percentage checks, blood pressure, nutrition and

dietary advice from nutritionists and dietitians as well as other fun activities by NMM and the NMM 2013 sponsors.

Other outreach activities consists of the Nutri-Fun primary school roadshows in the Klang Valley where educational combo kits containing materials such as the *Kembara Alam Sam* comic book and educational DIY nutritional props (foldable pyramid) which will be distributed to pupils who participate in the roadshows.

NMM 2013 has also planned seminar-cum-forums that will highlight NCD awareness and its prevention, which targets working adults at their workplace. This activity will include nutrition talks by experts with interactive Q & A sessions and free health screening with consultation by nutritionists and dietitians.

The NMM programme has been an annual initiative since 2002, and is the collaborative effort of three professional bodies — the Nutrition Society of Malaysia (NSM), Malaysian Dietitians' Association (MDA), and Malaysian Association for the Study of Obesity (Maso). This programme also receives support from the Health Ministry, particularly the Nutrition Division.

For details or to obtain literature produced by the NMM 2013, call the Secretariat at 03- 5637 3526.