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First Ladies visit kampung for a taste of rural life

WHILE Apec leaders were wrapping up their meeting yesterday at the Cyberview Lodge in Cyberjaya, some of their spouses were taken to Kampung Sungai Gulang-Gulang in Kuala Selangor for a taste of rural Malaysian life.

The leaders' wives were Allison Janette Howard of Australia, Aline Chretien of Canada, Chiang Chen Mei Fuey of Taiwan, Nilda Patricia Velasco de Zedillo of Mexico and Luisa P. Ejercito Estrada of the Philippines.

They were hosted by Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, wife of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

At 10am, they went on a bus tour of the village, before they witnessed a welcoming ceremony by the villagers and their children.

Then, kindergarten pupils put up a traditional choir performance.

Later, the First Ladies planted trees in the village grounds, followed by a visit to the clinic and several Amanah Ikhtiar Malaysia projects associated with women in development, such as micro-credit facilities and a batik manufacturing enterprise.

Before leaving, the First Ladies witnessed a mock bersanding ceremony between Ramdan Misri, and Norazlina Ahmad, both aged 24.

The couple, who are from the village, got married on Sunday but re-enacted the ceremony for the visitors.

The group then returned to Kuala Lumpur for an afternoon of shopping at Lot 10, Star Hill, and the Suria KLCC malls.

In Petaling Jaya, Chizuko Obuchi, wife of the Japanese Prime Minister, visited the Spastic Centre.

Accompanied by the Japanese ambassador's wife, Norika Nomura, Obuchi spent some time with the spastic children in the nursery and visited the music and movement room.

She then visited a nearby Kelab Syabas to watch the children and the Japanese volunteers have their weekly swimming session.

Obuchi presented 30 sets of swimming equipment - goggles, floats, flippers, swimming gear and towels - to the centre.

Also present during Obuchi's visit were the president of Spastic Children's Association of Selangor and Federal Territory, Datuk Lam Peng Chong, and the director of the Children Spastic Centre, Datuk Dr Mohindre Singh.

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