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Boldly go where you've not gone before

By Syida Lizta Amirul Ihsan

WHILE Malaysia is still waiting for its own Yuri Gagarin, Neil Armstrong or even the dog Laika (which was the first animal sent to space by Russia in 1957), the dream to become astronauts and space explorers continues to be nurtured.

To help schoolchildren understand outer space and journeys to seek life out there, Nestle launched its space science book at 1 Utama shopping centre in Petaling Jaya, recently.

The two-series book provides a brief background on the planets in our solar system, galaxies, asteroids and comets.

The book was launched by Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, wife of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Dr Siti Hasmah said space science was becoming more important as the country had aspirations to send its first astronaut next year.

"For the country to be acknowledged in this field, we must develop and teach the younger generation," she said.

"The involvement of Nespray in this field, with the co-operation of the Education Ministry and the National Space Agency in initiatives like the National Space Quiz, Rocket Technology and the Nespray Space Camp is commendable," she said.

National Space Agency director-general Datuk Mazlan Othman said the requirements for an astronaut were more than just physical and mental strength.

"In space, your life is in the hands of your friends there.

"We cannot send people who are egotistical or selfish to space," she said.

Dr Siti Hasmah also said that the candidate needed to be a team player too.

"There is a psychological test that they must go through as a requirement, apart from astronaut training," she said.

Guests at the event included 20 children from Rumah Kanak-Kanak Tunku Budriah, Cheras, and 80 students from Sekolah Kebangsaan Usaha Ehsan in Gombak.

To benefit more students, the books will be distributed to 8,848 primary schools all over the country and orphanages in the Klang Valley.

Also present were Education Ministry schools division assistant director Zainudin Abas and Nestle marketing director A. Ganesan.

The Nespray space book is given with the purchase of a Nespray 1.4kg soft pack while stocks last.

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