



Cats need stimulation and playtime to prevent boredom.



A Calico cat, named Nur Ain, loves to show off her running skills to visitors.

By Noor Hayati Muda

LIFE must have been tough for them when they lived in the streets and relied on kind humans to give them some food to get by.

The same spirit of benevolence has also transformed the fate of Sepang's stray and feral cat population, which has found a place to call home – namely, Taman Kucing Cyberjaya or Cyberjaya Cat Park run by the Sepang Municipal Council (MPS), where they are fed and cared for whilst waiting to be adopted by their 'fur-ever' families.

The park's resident felines not only look healthy and cute, but have also become chubby and affectionate – a far cry from their street days when they were skinny, covered in mange, and suffered from diarrhoea and haemorrhoids to the point of their intestines protruding through their anus.

A peek through the wire mesh of the half-wall building housing the cats shows several of them lounging around. Among them are the overly-friendly 'Oyen', its sister 'Nur Ain' that loves to show off – she would sprint like a marathoner on a spinning wheel whenever visitors come – and 'Ais Krim', which enjoys climbing and sitting on trees for hours.

The brainchild of MPS president Datuk Abd Hamid Hussain, the cat park serves a dual purpose of ensuring public areas like food courts and hawkker centres in the Sepang District are free of stray cats, and caring for these animals.

**'TNA' approach**  
Opened in March 2023, the 0.32-hectare Cyberjaya Cat Park is strategically nestled within Taman Tasik Cyberjaya, becoming an attraction for people who come to the lake garden to jog or pursue recreational activities.

The property, managed under the MPS Landscaping Department, has rescued about 100 stray cats so far, 75 of which have since been adopted by the public.

According to the department's director Arefah Rahim, the park practises the 'TNA' – 'trap, neuter and adopt' – approach whereby the cats are handed over to people wishing to adopt them as pets after they have gone through the treatment and neutering process.

"This method ensures the cats we rescue would not return to the streets. We screen the people who come to adopt them and their data is recorded in the e-Cat system that we developed," she tells Bernama.

Elaborating on the park's operations, Arefah says the rescued ones undergo a two-week quarantine to ensure that they do not have diseases that could spread to the other cats. "For those with conditions like mange, we treat them first. Once they are OK and have been vaccinated and neutered, they will be moved to the main building (in the cat park) and put up for adoption.

"The cats are free to roam in the main building, which is equipped with fans to keep them cool. They also have kibble to munch all day, and water to drink from a mini fountain.

"Once a week, we release the cats in the park area so that they can play. We do this on the advice of our veterinary



# 'Living a charmed life'

## Stray felines now have a place to call home at council-run 'cat park'

The park can accommodate up to 300 cats at a time but currently, it houses only about 30 cats. — Bernama photos



Photo shows the staff members managing the Cyberjaya Cat Park.

officer," she says, adding that the animals would usually return to the building by themselves after a while.

"But there are those that love to climb trees and refuse to come down. It can be quite a hassle waiting for them to come down," she adds, laughing.

**Experts' views**  
According to Arefah, the MPS has sought experts' opinions in all aspects of cat care, even before establishing the cat park – from the initial planning stage to the burial of cats that succumbed to illnesses.

"The park's design was developed by our park supervisor Munira Amuary after consulting with experts. We have also appointed a panel of veterinary clinics to examine the cats twice a week," she says, adding veterinarians are on-call 'day and night'.

"This is because we want these cats to receive immediate treatment should there be any case of emergency."

The food provided to the cats is also based on the experts' recommendations.

On the burial aspect, Arefah says the park uses the 'culvert' method, where two culverts are placed vertically in a 3m deep hole.

"To prevent any virus or bacteria from spreading, the burial site is lined with chalk and charcoal before filling it with soil.

This also helps prevent odour," she says, adding that so far only one of the cats rescued by them had died, due to leukaemia.

She also points out that the cat park employees are all cat lovers, which makes it easier for them to care for the animals.

Arefah remembers the initial stage of establishing the park, when the MPS staff were asked to apply if they wanted to work at the Cyberjaya Cat Park.

"We screened the applicants to ensure they are true cat lovers."

The staff at the park is headed by 'cat expert' Muhammad Ramdzan Johari, who is assisted by Khairul Anuar Md Rashid.

"I say Ramdzan is an expert because he can identify cats that are pregnant and those that are sick and so on. In fact, his wife runs a cat grooming and hotel business," says Arefah, who herself has three pet cats at home.

**Only taking in strays**  
To ensure MPS' objectives are met, the Cyberjaya Cat Park only takes in stray cats rescued from public places.

"We do not entertain people who want to hand over their cats to us. Earlier, some would leave their cats in front of our gate. There were also instances of people dumping their pets here at night," says Arefah.

"This issue forced us to put up warning signs, informing everyone about the area being monitored by closed-circuit

television (CCTV) cameras, and that the offenders would be fined.

"Since then, there have been no cases of cats being dumped here."

The park can accommodate up to 300 cats at a time but currently, it has only about 30 cats.

On the operating costs, Arefah says the park requires around RM70,000 annually to cover its expenses for caring for the cats, and feeding and providing them with treatments.

According to her, for now the allocation is being provided by MPS, but contributions from the public are very much welcome.

"We've set up kiosks and also have QR codes to make it easier for the public to contribute whether in the form of food or money.

"I especially notice that the use of the QR code has been very helpful because the donations are increasing every month. Many of the donors could be the people who come here (Taman Tasik Cyberjaya) to jog, but when they see a cat park, they would stop to contribute even if it's just a few ringgit."

**CSR programme**

Even though the cat park's operating costs are currently borne by MPS, something that may not be sustainable in the long term, the local authority is determined to not involve a third party, fearing that this may lead



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to commercialisation.

"We know that as soon as a third party joins us, whether as a sponsor or a patron, the commercial aspect will arise, which goes against our non-profit principles.

"Fortunately, each time we hold a programme, there are always organisations willing to contribute (to the cat park).

"Once, during an event, we received commitments amounting to RM70,000 in donations from corporate companies," says Arefah, adding that this initiative by the MPS has the full support of Tengku Permaisuri Hajah Norashikin, consort of the Sultan of Selangor, who is widely known as an animal lover.

"Her Majesty Tengku Permaisuri graciously inaugurated this park on March 18, 2023. In fact, someone wanted to adopt the cat that Tengku Permaisuri was seen holding and even offered us RM10,000, but we decided not to hand over the cat, named 'Luna', to the person concerned."

Arefah says MPS also participates in corporate social responsibility (CSR) programmes and open-day events to raise public awareness of the cat park.

"Over the past year, we participated in two such programmes, with each

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— Arefah Rahim, MPS Landscaping Department director

programme resulting in us bringing along 10 of our cats. We returned home with empty cages as all the cats were successfully placed with new owners."

Arefah also says MPS' initiative has caught the attention of other local authorities, including Kuala Lumpur City Hall and Klang Royal City Council, which are also planning to embark on similar programmes.

"So far, MPS has received visits from 11 agencies interested in undertaking similar projects, and I understand that some may involve property development companies," she adds.

For Muhammad Ramdzan, 36, when asked about the cats that have left a deep impact on him, he shares the story of 'Mak Tam', which arrived at the cat park with a big permanent scar on the left side of its abdomen.

"The scar had no fur and was probably caused by contact with hot water or oil.

"Fortunately for this cat, someone saw its beauty and adopted it."

He continues: "Then we have 'Oyen', Nur Ain' and 'Ci Ci', which were born in this park. Their mother is Daisy, who has since been adopted.

"We also have 'Ais Krim', named so because it has three colours like some ice creams. This one is naughty and loves to climb trees.

"Once, it managed to sneak out. We searched until night but could not find it. The next morning when I came to work, I saw Ais Krim waiting near the fence."

Muhammad Ramdzan, who himself has 17 cats at home, admits to feeling anxious at times when handing over the cats to their 'new families'.

"Once there was this man who came to adopt a cat. He looked like a gangster and I felt nervous about giving him one of our cats. But then, I realised that I must set aside such feelings – we need people to adopt our cats so that we can create space for other stray cats out there."

Meanwhile, Munira says besides the Klang Valley, the cat park has also received 'adoptive families' from other states like Penang and Melaka.

"They are charged an adoption fee of RM150, which covers the cost of vaccinating, deworming and neutering each cat."

The Cyberjaya Cat Park is open to the public every Wednesday and Sunday, as well as on public holidays.

On Wednesdays, it is open from 9am to 11am; and 2pm to 4pm.

On Sundays and public holidays, it is open from 9am to 11am; and 4pm to 6pm. — Bernama