Art competition to raise dengue awareness

AWARENESS among school students about the dangers of dengue is imperative in the fight against the disease.

To spread the word, the Research Center Biodiversity and Ecological Research Network (BEN), Universiti Malaya (UM) and Malaysian Society of Parasitology and Tropical Medicine (MSPTM), launched the Dengue Awareness Drawing Competition and Exhibition 2019 (Kuala Lumpur and Selangor) recently.

The free exhibition at the UM Art Gallery ends Feb 29 next year.

Event chairperson Dr Chen Chee Dhang said the competition was to promote dengue awareness among primary and secondary students in the Klang Valley.

"All stakeholders should take the initiative to improve the health of our citizens," he said, adding that the aim was to create a healthy Malaysia through the students’ artistic creativity.

The idea for the competition came about after Dr Chen and his research team conducted a survey with 900 graduate students around the Klang Valley over the past year.

The results showed that 17.18% of graduate students were unaware of how dengue was being transmitted, 23.34% were unaware that dengue was transmitted by Aedes mosquitoes, and 15.16% did not know about the common symptoms of dengue fever.

Their findings indicated the need for an awareness programme particularly among students.

BEN Research Center head Prof Dr Rosli Ramli said the infectious diseases carried by mosquito vectors are a rising public health concern.

Health Ministry Vector Borne Disease Sector Disease Control Division head Dr Rose Nani Mudin said there were 162 deaths out of a total of 116,942 dengue cases reported from January to November this year, with Selangor and Kuala Lumpur having the most number of cases nationwide.

"This is worrying. Many don’t even have basic information about dengue and how to control it," she said.

MSPTM president Associate Prof Dr Siti Nursheena Mohd Zain hoped that the event would be effective in highlighting the ways to promote knowledge of controlling Aedes mosquitoes and the prevention of dengue.

The competition was held from mid-August to mid-October. Over 200 entries were received.

SMK Kepong and SBJK (C) Sungai Way were recognised for contributing the most number of “excellent artwork”. A total of 36 students were awarded prizes.

SK Putrajaya Presint 5 (1) pupil Aliya Damia Azmi, 11, SMJK Katholik student Leong Tong Yan, 13, and SMK Kepong Ulu student Go Jing Jie, 16, were awarded first prize in their respective categories.