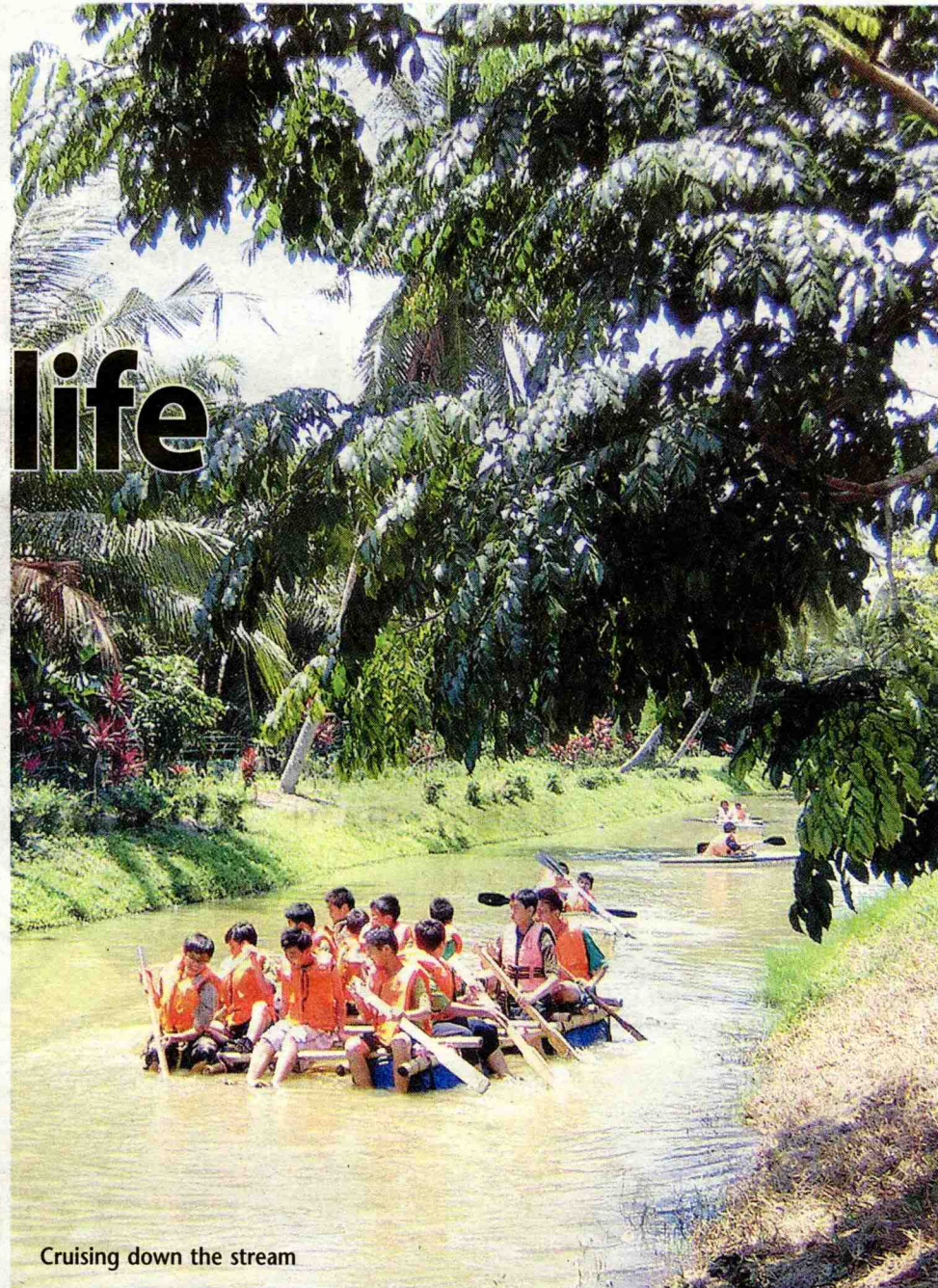




Enjoying themselves kayaking



Cruising down the stream

# Touch of rural life

It was stuff they had never done before. The 350 school children from Singapore had a time of their lives rafting, kayaking, spinning gasing and casting fishing nets.

**PEGGY LOH** reports

**T**HERE'S no better way to harness youthful energy than to channel it into healthy outdoor activities that are both fun and educational. Such boundless energy was profitably spent in hands-on activities that kept some 350 youths happily occupied for hours at rafting, kayaking, spinning wooden tops, casting fishing nets and flying traditional kites.

The Sungai Sudah Recreational Park in Muar, Johor, is dotted with gazebos and ponds, complete with a suspended bridge, jogging tracks and Nature walks that take visitors to view a padi field, fruit trees and flowering plants.

Overnight campers also enjoy night walks to experience rare owl activities. With only waist-high fresh water in the canal that meanders around the fenced site, proper use of life jackets and experienced volunteer instructors to supervise group activities, it is a safe and healthy environment to nurture youths and great fun for everyone.

## Things To Do

After watching a demonstration on how to cast a fishing net, the young visitors were ready to have a go themselves, but with a little help because the heavy net must be correctly assembled on the arm before it can be successfully cast.

It took just a little more courage to try out each task without fear of embarrassment because such activities were new to almost all young city folks. When someone finally managed to get a wooden top to spin, there was loud applause and all it took was a few tiny live fish hopping about in the raised nets to set off squeals of excitement!

The challenge of building a raft from several huge bamboo poles and four plastic oil drums was all about teamwork and a strong determination to assemble a floating craft. After learning the art of boarding the raft without sinking it, the youths had the satisfaction of paddling themselves up and down the canal.

At another staging point, youths were helped into single and double-seater kayaks. If their first attempts to manoeuvre the vessels ended up in an aimless spin, they managed to synchronise their paddles to cruise smoothly along the canal once they acquired the momentum!

This day trip was part of a study tour for youths

aged between 13 and 14 years from Compassvale Secondary School in Sengkang, Singapore.

Organised into groups, they were required to give their proposals on rebuilding a nation with considerations for culture and agriculture, to the prime minister of a fictitious country that was destroyed by a natural calamity. The school's audio-video team recorded the whole trip.

The accompanying teachers observed how the youths were building confidence and working well in teams. "It was a lot of work organising this study tour but it was worth it. We will certainly come back again," said a beaming Arasumani Retnasamy, teacher-coordinator for the tour.

## Getting There

Since 2002, the Recreational Park has hosted visitors at its 12-acre site adjacent to the Sg Sudah Agriculture Department office situated along the 52km mark of the Muar-Batu Pahat main road. For your own enriching outdoor experience in the Recreational Park, contact the Tour Coordinator on 019-7833382.



Gingerly crossing the suspended bridge



Challenge to build own raft

## HOW TO CONTACT US

**Group editor-in-chief** HISHAMUDDIN AUN **Group Editor**, NSTSB BRENDAN PEREIRA **Deputy Group Editor**, NSTSB SYED NAZDRI SYED HARUN **Coordinators** PUTRI ZANINA MEGAT ZAINUDDIN, TAN BEE HONG  
Please address letters, Press releases and invitations to Putri Zanina, NST Travel Pullout, 31 Jalan Riong, 59100 Kuala Lumpur or fax to 03-2282 0840 or email [traveltimes@nstp.com.my](mailto:traveltimes@nstp.com.my). Or call 03-2056 9839

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**Sabah:** Janrywine 088-24 5950 **Sarawak:** Venitia Samuel 082-34 2908 **Seremban:** Ramesh Pillai 06-762 3378 **Singapore:** Kalwant 02-6319 2159