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2007/12/20

Children's choir does Malaysia proud in north California

BERNAMA

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PETROLIA (California), THURS:

Malaysia's Operafest Children's Choir has done it again — this time in northern California where it held the audience spellbound with its range of folk songs and Christmas carols.

Led by its director, Kam Sun-Yoke, the choir, comprising 16 children and nine adults, sang their hearts out at the Mattole Grange Hall here last week.

Operafest was formed in 1986 to promote the arts and to provide a sound education through music.

Josie Brown, the co-ordinator for gifted and talented children in the Mattole Unified School District here, said Operafest came to this rural community to strengthen world peace and understanding through music.

"The true bridge between nations is built by the people communicating and getting to know one another and realising that we share far more similarities than differences," she said.

Ever since Operafest became the first Malaysian choir to have won second place in the famous Llangollen International Eisteddfod competition in Wales and third place in the choir Olympics of Koorfestival of Arnheim in the Netherlands in 1991, it has been propelled into the international circuit with invitations to perform at various choral festivals.

To date, Operafest, which is modelled along the lines of the famous Vienna Boys' Choir in Austria, has performed in the Netherlands, Wales, Spain, Argentina, India, Greece, Macedonia, Australia, Singapore, Indiana, New York and Montana (USA).

Brown said it was not all about singing as the choir members spent three days hiking around northern California — home to the famous redwood forests.

They also picked apples, made cider from apples and looked for salmon as part of efforts to enable the Malaysians to get a better understanding of life in a rural community in the United States, she said.

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They are elusive and are in danger. JASWINDER KAUR joins a team of WWF-Malaysia rangers on their trek in the jungles of eastern Sabah to get a whiff of the Sumatran rhinoceros and a first-hand look at the conservation work.

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