



JP/NURNI SULAIMAN

Flying high: Participants of the Borneo International Kite Festival fly their kites at Segara Manggar beach in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, on Sunday. At least 16 countries are participating at the festival, aiming to break a Guinness World Record by flying 6,000 kites simultaneously.

KITE FESTIVAL

Borneo event fails to break world record

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The three-day Borneo International Kite Festival, which concluded Sunday in Balikpapan, East Kalimantan, fell short of claiming a Guinness World Record.

However, thousands of children appeared unfazed by the failure as they cheered during the festival held at Segara Manggar Beach in conjunction with the 113th Balikpapan Anniversary.

"I am happy I have had the chance to fly a kite with my school friends," Siti, a school student in Balikpapan, said.

The organizers blamed the record-breaking failure on traffic congestion because it caused the participants to arrive at the venue late.

"The congestion was out of our hands," festival spokesperson Hidayat said.

"Members of the Borneo International Kite Festival could not arrive at the venue on time to break the

record."

The organizers had expected 6,000 kites, which would have been flown simultaneously at 2:30 p.m. but participants, Hidayat said, were not there at that time.

"We flew kites at 5:00 p.m. and half of the children had left by then," he said.

The most kites flown at one time were recorded in 2006 at the Gaza Strip with 3,710 in the air.

The kite flying venue was 5 kilometers from the Balikpapan CBD.

"We are not disappointed that we did not break the record. It is more important to have thousands of people at the venue enjoying the event together," Hidayat said.

Visiting participants came from 16 countries. Organizers expected 42 nationalities to attend.

David Gomberg, president of the American Kitefliers Association, said he was happy to participate at the festival and see local children fly kites at the event themed "Through Kites We Unite for Climate."

Gomberg explained that there

were two main reasons why he was interested in attending the festival.

"It's enjoyable to fly kites with children," he said.

"Kites are also closely related to climate through its use of the wind. Flying kites means [kite flyers] can join together to nurture the environment."

"This is the best kite flying event in the world [and] in the east," Gomberg said.

Local participants came from cities such as Jakarta, Bandung and Yogyakarta.

Gomberg took his kite to the event, which measured 10 meters in width and 30 meters in length.

Kevin Sanders of the Australian Kite Association had one measuring 9 by 30 meters.

The participants had kites with images representing their respective countries.

The organizers cooperated with PT Pos Indonesia by auctioning stamps with kite images. The fund will go to the Sungai Wain Protection Forest reserve program.