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Taipei marks World Animal Day with dog parade, fair

TAIPEI, Taiwan -- Braving windy and rainy weather, a dazzling dog parade took place in Taipei Sunday as part of celebrations to mark World Animal Day.

It was the first time that the Oct. 4 World Animal Day had been celebrated in Taiwan with such fanfare.

Although the approach of Typhoon Parma brought wind and rain to Taipei, many animal rights activists took part in the one-kilometer-long parade that ended in front of Taipei City Hall.

Many of the marchers were dogs decked out in colorful raincoats, head scarves and other decorations.

With a theme of opposing the abandoning of pets, gin traps and animal abuse, the parade was complemented by a trade fair, with about 60 booths selling pet foods and pet-care products.

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Organizers said 20 percent of proceeds from the sales would be donated to animal protection groups in southern Taiwan that were hard-hit by Typhoon Morakot in early August.

Many animal protection and rescue groups as well as pet veterinaries and clinics and stray dog centers also put up booths at the site to promote their cause.

As the event was organized by Animals Taiwan, a protection and rescue group founded by British expatriates in Taiwan, many foreign residents took part in the event to throw their support for animal rights protection.

The World Animal Day was started in 1931 at a convention of ecologists in Florence, Italy as a way of highlighting the plight of endangered species.

It was also the feast day of Saint Francis of Assisi, a Catholic deacon and the founder of the Order of Friars Minor, more commonly known as the Franciscans. He is known as the patron saint of animals and the environment, and it is customary for Catholic churches to hold ceremonies honoring animals around his feast day of Oct.4.

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