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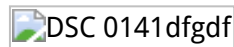
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USM CONTINUES THE TRADITION OF CELEBRATING INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS



PENANG, July 2015 - Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) continues the tradition of celebrating its students and staff who hail from different countries with its breaking-of-fast programme and holding the upcoming Aidilfitri celebrations.

The USM Vice-Chancellor Professor Dato' Dr. Omar Osman said, USM has been preparing breaking-fast meals throughout the years with the "gotong royong" (volunteerism and cooperation) community spirit which has been largely benefitted by the international students and staff.



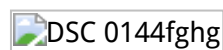
"Moreover with the undergraduates having their long semester break, the breaking-of-fast activity and engaging the Masjid Al-Malik Khalid would mostly involve the international community, as well as the USM staff and the surrounding local community," said Omar.

He added that, the meals prepared too would be able to serve as an introduction to the local culture in promoting closer ties among the USM community.



The USM Vice-Chancellor said this at the "Majlis Berbuka Puasa untuk Komuniti Antarabangsa" programme held here, which was also attended by the Deputy Vice-Chancellors, their spouses and the key officials of USM.

At the same time, the international students have high praises for this effort by USM, especially by those who are going through the month of Ramadhan with an experience which is different and being far away from their loved ones.

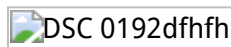


The President of the USM International Students' Society, who is completing his Doctoral degree at the National Advanced IPv6 Centre (USM), Muhammad Imran Sarwar, 32, expressed his feelings of joy and gratefulness in being able to break the fast with the Vice-Chancellor and key officials of USM, moreover

with the uniqueness of USM in preparing meals for the programme for free.

"I truly value the opportunity to come and study here, enabling me to experience the culture of the multi-racial Malaysian society, and this is the seventh year I am in Malaysia where every time Ramadhan arrives, though I would miss my home country, I would still feel lucky being here and having friends locally and from other countries to assist me," said Muhammad Imran who hails from Pakistan.

He said, the tradition of visiting friends of different religions, cultures and backgrounds at their homes is what he continues to practice while being here in Malaysia, with the experience of breaking fast here that is different compared to his own country.



Similar feelings were shared by a student from Bangladesh, Mohammad Bodrul Munir, 37, who has been staying in Malaysia for his Ph.D studies, where he described this country as being very suitable for further studies, as the population in majority are Muslims, and having the ease of convenience to go for prayers among others.

"I am truly excited seeing people of different cultures in this country living in harmony, and even having amiable friends here who are so obliging in treating us who come from foreign countries," he said further.

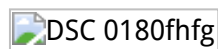
The School of Biological Sciences USM student added, adapting to the ways of living in the Malaysian society comes easy as there is little difference in terms of food choices and lifestyle, while being able to study at USM brings a sense of pride as well.

A friend of his, Nadia Farhana, 37, also agreed that generally Malaysians are good-natured and would always give a smile to non-Malaysians like her, and pointed out that breaking fast here is truly filled with delight.

Nadia Farhana who is currently doing her Ph.D studies at the School of Management also said that, she is really happy being in Malaysia more so at USM, as during Ramadhan there is the opportunity for her to go for the voluntary Tarawih prayers together with her friends from different countries while becoming closer as friends.

"In Malaysia, rice is served for breaking fast, which is different from my country, though I am still lucky to get to enjoy such a difference," she said, staying here with her only daughter.

A Nigerian Ph.D scholar, Michael B. Aleyomi, 35, said, although he is a non-Muslim he still enjoyed the chance to know more about the Malaysian culture while being at USM, especially about the food and the lifestyle which he considered as unique, where everyone here is able to live together in harmony even though they comprised of different races.



"The caring and kind-hearted nature of Malaysians and the university community are the positive factors I could see and although I have only been here for five months, I feel very much at home and hoping that such a situation would continue until I finish my studies," said the student from the School of Social Sciences further.

Meanwhile, a Ph.D candidate from the School of Computer Sciences, Pantea, 32, who has lived in Malaysia for the past six years, considers Malaysia as her second home after Iran.

“Malaysia is like a second home to me, and ever since stepping on to this country I could feel a sense of harmony, with all the delicious food and more importantly, being able to experience celebrating “hari raya” and personally seeing the culture and joining in the festivities of other communities,” said this beauty excitedly.

An undergraduate student from the School of Languages, Literacies and Translation and majoring in English For Professionals (EFP), Benjamin Cuttler, 23, said, this year is the first time he is fasting as he had converted to Islam last year.

“Fasting is truly exciting for me as not only it is compulsory for a Muslim, it teaches patience and to care for one’s health, and although it can be tiring I would try to fully commit myself to it,” said Cuttler who will tie the knot with a Malay girl this August.

Added Benjamin, the motivation from his future spouse and Muslim friends has made his first attempt at fasting in Ramadan this year a perfect and wonderful experience, with the many programmes and activities organised, as well as in providing relief from the memories of his family back home as he does his studies here.

The Vice-Chancellor and key officials of USM also mingled among the international students prior to the breaking-of-fast session and later performed the Maghrib congregational prayers.

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