General

UMPSA-BJTU students celebrate Aidilfitri abroad, strengthening ties in Beijing

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BEIJING, 21 MARCH 2026 – The joy of Hari Raya Aidilfitri continues to be felt by students from cohorts 3 and 4 of the Universiti Malaysia Pahang Al-Sultan Abdullah (UMPSA)–Beijing Jiaotong University (BJTU) dual degree programmes, who are currently pursuing their studies in Beijing, China, despite being far away from their beloved families.

One of the students, Putera Mikael Heikal Syhaiful Afanddi, 24, from Temerloh, Pahang, is currently in his final year of study in the Bachelor of Electrical Engineering (Power Systems) and Bachelor of Electrical Engineering and Automation programmes.

Putera, who has been in Beijing for one year and five months, is currently undergoing his final semester before proceeding with industrial training this coming May.

According to him, the experience of celebrating Aidilfitri abroad carries a very different meaning, with mixed feelings of sadness and joy.

“Of course, there is a sense of sadness because I am unable to celebrate Hari Raya with my family back home.

“However, despite that, we remain grateful to be able to celebrate it with our ‘Malaysian family’ here, including friends as well as support from the Malaysian Embassy, which also joined in enlivening the celebration,” he said.

He added that the Aidilfitri celebration in Beijing is not as festive as in Malaysia due to certain constraints, including the prohibition on the use of fireworks and the absence of a public holiday for the celebration.

“Here, the festive atmosphere is rather modest and seems to be celebrated only for a single day.

“We also face difficulties in obtaining traditional cooking ingredients such as coconut milk and spices, which limit the preparation of dishes such as lemang and ketupat,” he said.

Nevertheless, the spirit of preserving the Aidilfitri tradition continues.

As early as 6:30 am, the students will head to the mosque to perform the Aidilfitri congregational prayer, among them at Niujie Mosque, which is a focal point for the Muslim community in Beijing.

After that, they gather with other Malaysian friends to enjoy festive dishes prepared through communal work.

Preparations are carried out earlier through merewang, which has become one of the most meaningful moments throughout the celebration.

“Among the dishes we managed to prepare were chicken rendang, lontong, nasi impit, ayam masak merah, as well as various festive cookies.

“Although simple, it is enough to ease our longing for the atmosphere back home.

“Efforts to preserve traditions such as seeking forgiveness, reciting the takbir, and gathering among Malaysian students are also carried out to ensure that the values of Aidilfitri continue to flourish even while abroad,” he said.

He further said that, in an effort to foster international relations, the students also took the opportunity to celebrate Aidilfitri with international friends and the local community by inviting them to enjoy festive dishes and share Malaysian culture.

“This also becomes a platform for us to introduce the uniqueness of Malaysian culture and Aidilfitri traditions to the wider community,” he said.

However, Putera did not deny that there are various challenges that need to be faced, including differences in laws that require approval for organising activities, limitations in holding open celebrations, cold weather, and limited food ingredients.

At the same time, according to him, the most touching moment was the spirit of cooperation and togetherness among Malaysian students, particularly through the merewang activity, which strengthened their bonds.

“Although we are far from our families, we support one another.

“On the morning of Hari Raya, I will also contact my family through a video call to wish them Selamat Hari Raya and ease the longing,” he said.

Putera also appreciated the initiative of the university and the student community in providing special programmes in conjunction with Aidilfitri, which helped brighten the celebration among Malaysian students in Beijing.

Further commenting, Putera described Aidilfitri as a day of victory for Muslims that can still be celebrated joyfully wherever they may be.

“This experience teaches us the meaning of cooperation, tolerance, and appreciating the bonds between one another.

“In fact, the collaboration between students and the embassy also ensures that the Aidilfitri celebration can be carried out well even in a modest setting,” he said.

Putera hopes that future Aidilfitri celebrations can be celebrated in a more vibrant and inclusive manner.

“I hope that in the future, the Aidilfitri celebration will not only involve Malaysians, but can also be celebrated together with the international community so that it becomes more meaningful and

festive," he said.

To date, UMPSA remains the only public university that has implemented 12 dual degree programmes in collaboration with strategic partners, namely Karlsruhe University of Applied Sciences (HKA) and Mannheim University of Applied Sciences (THM), Germany; BJTU and Tianjin University, China; Kazakh National Agrarian Research University (KazNARU), Kazakhstan; and most recently with Hanyang University Erica Campus, South Korea.

By: Naqiah Puaad, Centre for Corporate Communications

Translation by: Ts. Dr. Rozaimi Abu Samah, UMPSA Press

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