



'HARI RAYA' A CELEBRATION ON A GLOBAL SCALE

In the previous edition of **ADhub**, we put the spotlight on the holy month of Ramadan. This is, of course, the period when Muslims around the world perform fasting from dawn until dusk. But when Ramadan closes its curtains, Muslims will shift their attention to the festival celebrations of Eid al-Fitr.

In Arabic, it means "festival of breaking fast" but locally in Malaysia, it is fondly known as "Hari Raya" and "Aidilfitri". With it being the country's premier celebration, both Muslims and non-Muslims take advantage of the extended holidays to return to their hometowns. Consequently, major cities such as Kuala Lumpur, Petaling Jaya, and even Cyberjaya and Putrajaya are empty during this period.

The Malays, who make up the bulk of the local Muslim population, will dress up in traditional clothing on the first day of Hari Raya. They will often visit their relatives and neighbours during this time. Foods which are traditionally linked with this festive include ketupat, lemang, rendang, and a variety of kuih raya.

However, what makes Malaysia unique is that Eid celebrations here last an entire month. The tradition of visiting relatives lasts until the end of Shawal (the month of Eid). This is why you will see open house events taking place every weekend. The same can be said of Raya songs. They can be heard on the airwaves from the early days of Ramadan until the end of Syawal.

But with over 1.6 billion Muslims worldwide, have you ever wondered how "Hari Raya" is celebrated in other parts of the globe?

UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

The first day of Eid in the UK starts early in the morning where Muslims gather at a local mosque to perform Eid prayers. They dress in their finest clothes and enjoy a lavish meal later in the day. Since 2011, the city of Birmingham has played host to the annual "Celebrate Eid" festival. This happens to be the largest Eid festival in Europe. Last year, a record number of 140,000 people attended the event. It is organised by the Green Lane Masjid and Community Centre (GLMCC). You can expect to find global delicacies, a bazaar, and a funfair.



CHINA

There are around 21 million Muslims in China and the largest of this community can be found in Xinjiang and Ningxia. The first day of Eid is a public holiday in these two districts. It is also tradition for the Muslims around the country to visit the graves of their relatives. Thereafter, they will recite a few verses from the Koran and leave rice and wheat on the tombstones.



INDIA

After Indonesia and Pakistan, the third-largest Muslim population in the world can be found in India. Here, the night of Eid is known as "Chaand Raat" and this is when most households perform some last-minute shopping. Young women will celebrate the occasion by wearing colourful bracelets and henna. Among dishes which are typically served during Eid include biryani, meethi sewai, and sheer khurma.



AFGHANISTAN



"Hari Raya" in this country is celebrated for three whole days. One of the more bizarre ways they celebrate this festival period is by engaging in a massive egg fight. Known as "Tokhm-Jangi", families will gather at parks with hundreds of bright-painted hard-boil eggs. Everyone will then try to crack each other's eggs. During the night, households will light bonfires outside and engage with some socializing.

UNITED STATES (US)



Although Muslims are a minority group in America, Eid al-Fitr is still a joyous celebration. After the early morning Eid prayers, Muslims will gather with friends and family to exchange gifts and share special holiday meals. It's also traditional to give to the poor. Some Muslim communities here will gather by the thousands in sports stadiums. They have also developed their own distinctive ways of marking the holiday, such as hosting barbecues in local parks and holding voter registration drives. During recent times, some Muslim groups have campaigned for schools in some parts of the country to allocate Eid al-Fitr as a day off without being penalized.