FASTING EXPERIENCE AND SYAWAL CELEBRATION ABROAD AT TSUKUBA JAPAN (SITI HAFSAH, JUN 2019)

The arrival of Syawal is much awaited by every Muslims throughout the world. It signalled the end of Ramadan. As it coincided, while pursuing my PhD Joint Supervision at University of Tsukuba, I have to celebrate Aidilfitri here together with my beloved husband in Japan. A trusted experience without children and the whole family was a bit depressing moment for me.

Throughout the month of Ramadhan, I went through fasting every day as early as 1.30 am and breaking at 6.40 pm. Fasting time is longer, about 16-17 hours a day compared to in Malaysia. Comfortable weather conditions with temperatures around 17-20°C provided comfort for me. The routine of my studies at the university is not very solid. Every morning I went to the “lab” to carry out research and thesis writing throughout the day with lab-mates which are from Japan, Tunisia, Vietnam, Brazil, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Laos. Only three (3) students in this lab are Muslims including me.

Normally, after returning home in the evening, I will prepare to break meal with my own cooking. When I came here in early April 2019, I did not forget to bring together biryani rice, spices such as curry powder, belacan paste and other Malay (Asian) seasoning powder for cooking.

After Maghrib prayer, I went for tarawih prayers at Tsukuba Mosque which is located not far from the university. My husband and I cycled for about 30 minutes to get there. The experience of doing tarawih was just the same everywhere. Here, I get to meet Muslim foreign students and those who work in Japan. Every Sunday, there will be a breaking of fast together and the food is prepared by the communities from different countries. On the second week of Ramadhan, Malaysians and Indonesians communities jointly set up fasting meals by cooking our own different kind of dishes such as rice with meat rendang, boiled eggs with chillies, mixed vegies, fried chicken and dates.

For the preparation of welcoming 1st Syawal in Japan, it is not as good as the way I celebrated it in Malaysia. I only brought a pair of complete baju kurung (for me) and baju melayu, songkok with sampin (for my husband) to wear for Eid prayers. We celebrated Aidilfitri at the Malaysian Embassy in Tokyo together with all Malaysians in Japan. Since this is my first time abroad during Aidilfitri, the atmosphere of homesickness for relatives and families is felt during the highlight of the morning prayer. The celebration of Eid Mubarak in Japan will be the sweet memories in my life.