Hisaho’s life-changing experience

The Hari Raya Aidilfitri celebration holds special significance for Japanese student Hisaho Takagi. That’s because Hisaho aka Javeriah Takagi embraced Islam less than two months ago.

The new convert also got her first taste of fasting during the recent month of Ramadan.

Said Hisaho: “Observing Ramadan and fasting was quite hard, but it was very good. And when I pray before my meals, I really appreciate the food when I ate it.”

It is therefore no surprise when the native of Hokkaido says that coming to Malaysia has been a life-changing experience. Firstly, she discovered Islam, and secondly, she discovered Malaysia.

“Before I came here, I had the impression that Malaysia is a small country without proper infrastructure, unlike Japan. But when I arrived, my eyes were opened,” she said.

“Malaysia is not only quite big but also a very nice country with many amenities quite similar to what we have in Japan.”

Hisaho has also found at least one major similarity in the lifestyles of both the Japanese and Malaysians – the love of food.

“In Hokkaido, food is simple, consisting mainly fish, milk, cheese and cake, but delicious. Here, the food is also too good to resist, even though it is spicy and oily, unlike what I am used to!”

The 28-year-old, who has been in Malaysia for more than two years, is pursuing a course in tourism management at Sunway College’s School of Hospitality and Tourism Management (SHTM).

“I chose this course because of my love for travelling and interest in learning about other people’s culture,” said Hisaho.

“Sunway College has a good study environment and lecturers. I have to add that when it comes to education opportunities, Malaysia is one of the best countries for furthering one’s studies, because many universities and colleges here have close collaboration with renowned universities around the world. And while Malaysia is developed in many areas, it is however cheaper than Japan by comparison.”

Hisaho revealed that besides fulfilling her academic expectations, her college life has been filled with memorable experiences such as the Cultural Nite and the recent Incoming SHTM Students’ Day. She even helped organise a group tour to Endau-Rompin in Johor.

“Apart from being able to learn first-hand about organising tours, it was also a good time spent with classmates of different nationalities, while enjoying nature and adventure. A most memorable experience indeed.”

Hisaho, who will be going home next November, said that the most important aspect of Malaysia that she would take home to Japan has to be her new religion, of which she is learning “step by step to be like other Muslims”.

“My parents, who are Buddhists, were very understanding when I told them,” she said.

“They said this is my life, and because there are not many Muslims in Japan, they want to understand more about Islam too. Apart from that, I will also take with me the culture and experience that I have acquired while here in Malaysia.”

The future entrepreneur intends to start a restaurant after completing her studies.