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Getting into the spirit of Merdeka

BEIJING EXPRESS

By CELESTE FONG

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Malaysians in China are reminded of the cultural uniqueness of our country through the various Merdeka celebrations here.

WE'VE sweated through a hot and humid stretch of August in the Chinese capital and my local friends say such dog days of summer are just like the weather in Malaysia.

Well, it's not just the hot weather here that reminds us of home, but also the month of August, which is Merdeka month! And it is especially now that we are reminded of the cultural uniqueness of our country.

In the words of Malaysian Ambassador to China Datuk Syed Norulzaman Syed Kamaruzaman, "We are what we are and we should feel proud and share this with our Chinese friends here."

As such, from next week, various Merdeka celebrations will kick off in Beijing and other parts of China before culminating in the Aug 31 receptions in Beijing and other cities like Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

"We want to show what we have achieved in building a harmonious country out of multi-ethnic races.

"We want them to know us better and to build a closer relationship with China," said Syed Norulzaman.

According to him, there are over 30,000 Malaysians in China comprising some 600 to 700 in the Chinese capital, 15,000 in Hong Kong, 8,000 in Guangzhou and 2,000 in Macau.

"The Merdeka celebrations to mark the nation's 50 years of independence will keep the Malaysian spirit alive within our own community (in China)," he said.

Showing his gratitude for the support of Malaysian companies and individuals to the celebrations, Syed Norulzaman said Malaysians here are committed to flying the Jalur Gemilang.

He said he would host a Merdeka Family Day on Sept 8 at his residence, Rumah Malaysia, for Malaysian families.

Outside Beijing, Shanghai will have its Merdeka Night on Sept 1, and the Malaysian community in Suzhou and Hong Kong, are doing something, too.

Malaysia Week, which will be launched at the Shangri-La Kerry Centre Hotel here on Aug 27, will feature everything Malaysian from a demonstration of batik painting by UiTM students to cultural dance performances and a photo

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Syed Norulzaman:

'We want them to know us better and to build a closer relationship with China'

exhibition.

From Monday to the end of August, the hotel is holding a Malaysian Food Festival at its Coffee Garden in conjunction with Visit Malaysia 2007 and the nation's Golden Jubilee celebrations.

"Two chefs from Shangri-La Kuala Lumpur have been flown here for the food fest," said the hotel's Communications Assistant Director Chan Sue Meng.

By Friday, visitors to the Kerry Mall concourse will be greeted by a replica of the 88-storey Twin Towers, dubbed Kuala Lumpur's symbol and once the tallest structure in the world.

Six Malaysian restaurants – Awana, Cafe Sambal, Malacca Legend, Nyonya Kitchen, Peranakan and the Yard in the Chinese capital – will take part in the Malaysia Week and visitors can get a taste of Malaysian food like satay and *teh tarik*.

Sponsored by Tourism Malaysia, Operafest, a 22-member choir of children between the ages of eight and 14, will perform for the Merdeka celebrations here.

"They will perform at Beijing World Park before singing on the Great Wall of China," said Tourism Malaysia Beijing office director Michael Tay.

(The Beijing World Park is located in Fengtai District, about 17km from Tiananmen.)

Tay said the embassy welcomes everyone to come and join the celebrations, adding that there will be fun activities for children.

Colouring contests will be held for the children, and there will also be a competition to guess the value of coins placed inside a replica of the Twin Towers.

"The person who makes the closest guess will walk away with the coins," Tay said.

Visitors will also be given a "Malaysian passport," which they could get stamped for some special gifts, he added.

Two weeks ago the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Industry of China started its Merdeka Badminton tournament.

This is to be followed by a Merdeka Golf Tournament on Friday and a Maycham Ball on Saturday in Beijing.

So, who says you have to be back home to feel the spirit of Merdeka and enjoy the celebrations?

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