







## INTERNATIONAL FIESTA, FOSTERING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY

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4 November 2023 – The Centre of International Relations (CIR), in collaboration with the Centre for Modern Languages (CML) as well as Confucius Institute (CI) and Centre for Strategic Academic Relations (CSAR), hosted International Fiesta at Astaka Hall, UMPSA Paya Besar Campus.

Apart from cultural exhibitions at booths organised by international students representing countries like Yemen, Indonesia, Libya, Germany, local students too opened booths to showcase cultures of the foreign languages offered by the Centre for Modern Languages including English.

Preparations for the International Fiesta commenced at least a month prior to the event. Performance groups underwent rigorous training sessions since the beginning of the semester to deliver their best performances. The teams responsible for cultural booths designed various cultural activities aimed at engaging visitors to experience the cultures showcased, fostering cultural exchange and promotion.

The fiesta commenced promptly at 9:00 a.m. Participation also came from primary and secondary schools such as SMART, SK Lepar, SK Wira, SK Tunku Azizah, SK Sultanah Kalsom, and SMK Sultan Ahmad.

The atmosphere was very festive and ‘happening’ as visitors went from booth to booth experiencing and immersing themselves in different cultures and customs.

Among the activities offered, participants learned to make sushi at the Japanese cultural booth and wear the traditional Japanese costumes; they drank Chinese tea and crafted name cards of their own names using Chinese characters at the Chinese cultural booth which provided brushes for visitors to experience calligraphy.

Meanwhile, the Malay cultural booth introduced traditional musical instruments like the kompang as well as games like Congkak and Batu Seremban or jackstones for the visitors to play. Simultaneously, the English cultural booth generated excitement by preparing an English tea party spread for participants to savour.

At the Spanish cultural booth, participants learned Spanish idioms and were made to guess Spanish traditions and at the Arabic booth, participants lined up to have their picture taken in the setting of a typical Arabic home as well as take a virtual tour of Masjid al Aqsa. The booth also drew in a crowd of female participants by having a henna artist at hand to draw exquisite henna designs.

Interestingly, at the German cultural booth, visitors got to play puzzles and were introduced to kartoffelsalat, an authentic German style potato salad. Visitors also had the option of getting their face painted with the German flag.

While the cultural booths were buzzing with interesting activities, the stage performances were equally captivating. The performances began at 9:15 a.m. and showcased various languages in different formats from song and dance to sketches and poetry recitals.

This was followed by the German cultural talk at noon, hosted by CSAR, which had the audience motivated to want to visit Germany. The guest speakers were HKA Flying Professor Dr. -Ing. Maurice Kettner and German Dual Degree alumni, Ms. Elissa Mohd. Azhari.

Another highlight of the International Fiesta was the Trashion Show, where students dug deep into their creativity to reimagine traditional or internationally-recognised attires from different countries utilising recycled materials.

This innovative Trashion Show marked a first of its kind fashion event ever organised during International Fiesta. It serves as a platform not only to promote creativity and environmental sustainability, it also allowed students to showcase their presentation skills!

Each 'art-tire' that came down the runway was accompanied by a presentation that eloquently explained what the attire was, how it was constructed, its significance, who typically would wear it and when and where it was usually worn, giving spectators insight into the culture of that country!

From fashion to culinary delights, at around 2:00 p.m., international students brought out a diverse array of food that represented their countries from sweet desserts to dumplings and aromatic Arab rice dishes. This culinary showcase seamlessly coincided with the arrival of esteemed dignitaries for the Closing Ceremony of the International Fiesta, which commenced officially at 2:30 p.m.

The ceremony also unfolded with a vibrant and energetic performance by the international students from India. Everyone was swaying to the infectious singing and music.

Representatives from CI further elevated the event by mesmerising the audience with Chinese musical instruments performances, Chinese songs and even a Tai chi demonstration. The grand finale of the International Fiesta was marked by the presentation of awards, recognising the creativity of the Trashion Show winners as well as the most popular International booth!

It is great that the university understands the importance and benefits of organising events like International Fiesta as the various activities not only serve as a platform for students to let their hair down while learning about other cultures, they are also platforms for building community as they bring people together, fostering friendships among students and also with their instructors.

By embracing differences and celebrating similarities, International Fiesta promotes tolerance and harmony. Its activities also serve to develop creativity, recognise talent and apply knowledge; and the best thing is students do not even need to leave the country to be part of such a global community!

With UMPISA actively pursuing internationalization and elevating its global ranking, International Fiesta enables global networking by facilitating networking opportunities among individuals from various cultural backgrounds. This can lead to the establishment of valuable connections, both on a personal and professional level, contributing to a more interconnected and globally aware community.

Beyond providing top-tier education, there is a need to broaden students' international perspectives. Looking ahead, we envision the International Fiesta to become an even more vibrant and impactful event, facilitating a richer cross-cultural exchange for all involved

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