

# Essay on Things Unique to My Country

The very first thing that would strike a visitor to Malaysia is that it is a multi-racial country. My friends from overseas all agree without a doubt that we live in relative racial harmony. Our tolerance of others of different races and religions makes us unique in the world. We do not have race riots like those in Britain and we do not have segregation of whites from blacks. Granted we are still not perfectly integrated but we live in far, far better conditions than many other countries.

Malaysia is very lucky in that we do not have huge natural disasters. Besides the annual floods that may take some lives, we do not have things like volcanoes and hurricanes that can cause real damage. We do not get droughts and famines. Our land is fertile all over. We can grow almost anything here. Our freedom from such disasters makes us unique indeed.

In every town that one can go to, there is always the ubiquitous "glutton square" where people go to eat. In these places where food stalls are set up, one can eat almost anything that one desires. The only limitation is the stomach. How much of good food can one take at one go? There are so many things available at prices that are very reasonable. There are food and more food everywhere. There are also drinks, drinks and more drinks available to satisfy your fancy. Nowhere else in this world can one have a unique glass of "air batu campur" to go with a delicious plate of "rojak". Where else can we get a plate of chicken rice to go with a cool glass of freshly prepared sugar-cane water? Where else can we sit and watch the throngs of people come and fill their bellies? No wonder we have so many pot-bellied people here. The food is simply incomparable.

Over the past few years, another unique Malaysian phenomenon has

sprung up. This is the night market or “pasar malam” as it is popularly known. At one of these “pasar malam’s” one can see dozen of vans all parked within a small area. The sight of these numerous vans would gladden the hearts of the Japanese van manufacturers. These vans carry a variety of goods and when night falls the goods are displayed prominently beside the vans for the crowds that come to see and buy. It is quite a unique experience to go into one of these “pasar malam’s” and simply wander around looking at the immense variety of things that are sold there. Under the glare of fluorescent lamps, one can get almost anything from a simple cheap wallet to an expensive original painting by a local artist. If one is not thinking of buying anything, there is always the educational trip of seeing how people of many races can come together side-by-side and engage in the common activity of buying and selling. This is indeed a unique feature of my country.

What else are unique? There are many things. Our festivals are celebrated by everyone regardless of their ethnic origins. We visit one another on Hari Raya, Chinese New Year, Deepavali and other occasions. We may find a group of Chinese conversing in Bahasa Malaysia or Indian bickering with a hawker in Cantonese. A Malay man writes letters in Tamil for his illiterate Tamil neighbors and a Punjabi reads the Bahasa Malaysia news for us on television, We are simply a fantastic set of human beings living in a fantastic country.

So what does the future hold for us? I would imagine even more fantastic things only if we continue to exercise tolerance and understanding. There are a number of religious bigots and racialists but genuine peace-loving Malaysians far outnumber these extremists. We can live happily in this unique country of ours.