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Friendly people and food a big pull factor for many

PARENTS will do anything for their children. Kazi Ahmed Hossain is no exception.

As a Bangladeshi married to a Japanese Muslim-convert, Kazi wanted a home where his sons, six-year-old Rumi and two-year-old Samy could grow up in the proper Muslim tradition.

Kazi, 37, and his wife Keiko Fatema, 32, wanted to be able to take their children out for meals without having to worry if the food was not halal.

The children liked their McDonald's, and Kazi loved his steak, and Keiko wanted her Japanese food. All of this had to be halal, and it had to be easily available.

Malaysia was the perfect answer for them.

When they lived in Japan, they could only go to Japanese restaurants that only served fish. This was not a satisfactory solution for Kazi.

"Food is a very important issue. Here, Keiko can have her Japanese food, which she might not have in Bangladesh," Kazi said.

For Kazi, a consultant who handles projects in Japan as well as Bangladesh, Malaysia is very conveniently located because it is three hours' flight to Bangladesh and five or six hours away from Japan.

The locals are also very friendly.

"Malaysia is like America, but better. Everyone respects everyone - their culture and religion."

Kazi first came to the country in 2000 as a consultant for a Japanese recruiting company, which had dealings with Star Cruises here.

From that, and subsequent visits, he realised that Malaysia was very nice. He sent in his application, which was processed in two weeks, deposited RM150,000, put his Tokyo house up for rent (which provides a monthly income of RM12,500), and moved here with his family last month.

For Mohd Faridul Islam (picture), 52, a senior flight engineer with Biman (Bangladesh Airlines), whose children are all grown up, an admiration for former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad was an attraction.

He first visited Malaysia in 1985. Repeat visits, and a reasonable application process, clinched the deal for him.

He now comes to Malaysia once a month, and hopes to move here when he gets decommissioned in a few years.

For Mikio Mori, 52, and his wife Etsuko, 40, from the Fukui prefecture in Japan, Malaysia is a wonderful place for retirement.

Having worked as an administration manager at a Fukui petroleum storage company, Mikio decided to take optional retirement and enjoy the warm weather of Malaysia.

Unlike some Japanese applicants who choose to come to Malaysia during the Japanese winter and go back to the Japanese summer, the Moris want to live here year-round.

On top of the weather, friendly Malaysians, and the stable political situation here, the cost of living is low.

"I can make my yen stretch three times as long here than if I were to live in Japan," said Mikio through an interpreter.

"We don't want to be confined to Japanese culture alone. We want to assimilate with the local culture here... Come back and interview us again in one year - I will try my best to answer your questions in Malay," said Mikio.

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