

M'sia will always be the best home

With newfound political stability, we Malaysians are indeed more blessed compared to many enchanting countries which are struggling economically.

THE timeless Malay proverb “hujan emas di negeri orang, hujan batu di negeri sendiri, baik juga di negeri sendiri”, has been quoted so often that it borders on cliché.

It serves as a reminder that no matter how captivating foreign lands may be, there is no place like home.

But in the early days of my recent journeys, I found myself quietly contemplating its wisdom, momentarily consumed by the captivating sights and sounds that surrounded me.

In Turkiye, I felt as though I was living a dream. The streets of Istanbul, with their rich history, beckoned to me. The scents of street food, the warmth of the people, and the grandeur of the old city stirred a deep connection. I imagined the city had been waiting for me.

It was a fanciful thought, but the bond I felt was undeniable.

From there, I travelled to Chios, Greece, an island where time seemed to move slowly with the gentle rhythm of the sea. The crystal-clear waters and ancient ruins filled me with a sense of serenity.

Greece, with its mythic beauty, was easy to love.

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Comment

From there, I travelled to Egypt, the land where history breathes through every grain of sand. The grandeur of the pyramids was humbling, and the resilience of the Egyptian people left an indelible mark. Despite hardship, their warmth and hospitality were unmatched.

The food, too, was a revelation, brimming with flavours I had never anticipated.

Yet, something was missing.

Reality set in as I witnessed the economic struggles in these countries. Turkiye, for all its beauty, is burdened by soaring inflation and a plummeting lira, leaving many struggling to afford basic needs.

Greece, though stunning, is still grappling with the aftermath of its economic crisis, casting a shadow over its idyllic islands.

But Egypt's struggles were the most striking. The once-great city of Cairo is now mired in economic instability.

One Egyptian friend confided: “If you earn in Egyptian pounds, you live with constant anxiety. Jobs that pay in US dollars are rare, but for many, they are the only hope for survival.”

Many Egyptians have resorted to eating just one meal a day, even those with stable incomes. The energy crisis adds to their burdens, with residents required to turn off electricity each night to conserve power.

Businesses struggle while those who can afford to “pay off” officers may keep their lights on. The rest face fines or uncertainty.

As my travels continued, I found myself longing for the comforts of home.

Yes, Turkiye offers exquisite cheeses, and Greece the freshest olives, but where was my beloved “cili padi”?

Egypt's tea was satisfying, but I missed the simplicity of “teh o ais”.

By the time my final week in Egypt arrived, the relentless heat - hovering at 45° to 50°C - had me yearning for Malaysia's cool, rainy days!

So when I stepped out of Kuala Lumpur International Airport into a familiar drizzle, I felt an overwhelming sense of gratitude. The lush greenery, fertile soil, and almost predictable rains - these were the blessings I had long taken for granted.

In Malaysia, like many nations, we grapple with the rising cost of living and the ever-present shadow of corruption. While we strive for unity beyond our rich racial and cultural diversity, the stories in our media remind us of the challenges we face.

Yet, despite these complexities, this country continually strives to foster harmony among its races and religions, while our leaders make efforts to combat corruption and alleviate the cost of living.

Perfection, of course, is unattainable, and like many Malaysians, I have my share of criticisms.

However, I also recognise the commendable efforts being made to address these issues. There is room for economic improvement, and it is heartening to see my fellow citizens making daily strides towards progress.

In the end, it is these unrelenting efforts, in the face of adversi-

ty, that define us. For at the core of our collective strength is the drive to persevere and improve, regardless of the challenges we face.

Despite my deep connection to Turkiye and my enchantment with Greece and Egypt, I came to a realisation: Malaysia, with its unique tapestry of cultures, exquisite cuisines and stunning landscapes, will always be my home.

No other place can quite compare to the comfort of ayam lemak cili padi, asam pedas, cheong fun or tosai.

As a journalist, the endless political turbulence and constant changes in federal administrations over the past few years have drained my colleagues and me.

In this moment of much-needed political stability, I feel a sense of calm. Malaysia's leadership, having faced numerous tests, now seems poised for steadiness. This newfound political stability allows us to envision a more grounded future, where progress can flourish without the looming spectre of uncertainty.

And so, with renewed appreciation for this “tanah bertuah”, I celebrate Malaysia. Selamat Hari Malaysia to all my fellow Malaysians. We are indeed more blessed than we often realise.