

ENLIGHTENING TOUR AND 'PRACTICAL' FOR MALAYSIAN AND KOREAN-JAPANESE PILGRIMS

7 February 2015



From the melodious chiming of *kuil* temple bells in Kuala Lumpur to the *azan* call of prayer at a mosque in Putrajaya, 52 pilgrims celebrating this year's UN World Interfaith Harmony Week immersed themselves in Malaysia's vibrantly diverse socio-religious fabric.

Organised by Universal Peace Federation (UPF) of Malaysia, the "Peace & Harmony Tour" on 7 February 2015 started with a visit to a Hindu temple in the metropolitan city of Kuala Lumpur, thence to an Anglican church in the adjacent town of Petaling Jaya, and culminated in a grand tour of a famed mosque in the federal administrative capital of Putrajaya.

Among the participants were 19 mixed Korean-Japanese students for whom the day-long pilgrimage was a deeply enriching cultural experience providing them a flavor of Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam — three religions with large followings in Malaysia.



Dr. K. Thilaga-wathi explained about the significant of the sacred fire

At Sri Kandaswamy Temple in Kuala Lumpur's "Little India" Brickfields district, many of the pilgrims understood for the first time the intricate symbolism behind the stone deities and the elaborate rituals by which Hindus acknowledge the one God as king of kings, as explained by the temple guide Dr. K. Thilaga-wathi. When the sacred fire was brought out to them by the high priest, the pilgrims devoutly purified their minds by sweeping the flames up to their faces. UPF Malaysia president Tan Sri Dr. Devaki Krishnan arranged the visit which ended with breakfast hosted by the temple committee.



Rev Joshua Ong briefing the pilgrims

At St Paul's Church in Petaling Jaya, vicar Rev. Joshua Ong briefed the pilgrims and stressed the importance of finding commonalities in addition to knowing the differences between religions. He praised the efforts of Rev. Sun Myung Moon, founder of UPF, in promoting intercultural marriages as a way to break down ethnic barriers.



Group photo taken against the backdrop of the iron-clad mosque

On to Masjid Besi (the iron-clad mosque) in Putrajaya. We arrived with time to spare before the zuhur prayers. By special arrangement that UPF Malaysia council member Mahadi Mohd made with the mosque committee, the pilgrims were given the rare experience of a field trip practical. After the ablution or washing of one's feet, arms, face, mouth, nose and hair to augment a cleansing of the mind, the pilgrims entered the hall to observe the congregational prayer and to emulate the Muslims in their physical movements that denote the focusing of attention on God, and the act of un-focusing or returning their attention to the world at the conclusion of prayer. Then followed a lively Q & A session conducted by Dr. Sayyid Hussain, assisted by emcee Tuan Ibrahim Mohd, who emphasized that the primary teaching of Islam is the oneness of God and humankind, and our duty of submission to God. The mosque hosted lunch for the pilgrims.

Back at Peace Embassy, where the tour had started out, the pilgrims renewed their pledge to “love the good, and love the neighbour” before departing for home in the evening.

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