THE Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Lantern Festival, Mooncake Festival or 'Zhongqiu', has traditionally been a family affair.

In Chinese culture, mooncakes are shared among family members as its round shape symbolises unity in a family.

Even in present times, the celebration is still observed even when family members are miles away from home.

Friends are family
For university students, friends and classmates may even be considered one's own family when celebrating a festival.

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR) graduate Adrian Wong and his friends celebrated the Mid-Autumn festival every year together when they were in college.

"As the timing of the festival usually comes right in the middle of our semester, it was inconvenient for most of us to travel home to be with our families," said Wong, 23, who hails from Sibu, Sarawak.

"The idea started with only four of us, who were classmates in our foundation course.

"Over time, we invited more people to join, and the group expanded to 15."

"A group of friends who studied..."
Choo Jia Yi, 23, volunteered to work at the Moon Lantern Festival event in 2012, organised by OzAsia Festival in Adelaide, Australia.

"I wanted to experience celebrating the Mid Autumn Festival in another country."

"I actually knew about the event when I was in Adelaide in 2009. But only decided to check it out last year as I was about to graduate," she said.

From Choo's description, the event was in many ways similar to the annual celebrations at Central Market, Kuala Lumpur.

"The event was huge! The main attraction was probably the parade, where they displayed giant modern lanterns. Some were even designed after cartoon characters," said Choo.

Many food stalls were set up featuring all kinds of food from various Asian cuisines, with fireworks adding a grand finale at the end of the event.

"It was an interesting experience to see how Australians celebrated the occasion.

"I also got to meet people from many countries and made new friends," she added.

The costumes are fully handmade.

"Our teacher helped us so much, so we wanted to do our very best," added Koh Chui San, another 22-year old student from Malacca.

For this performance, the students practised diligently every night, even in the absence of their supervising teacher.

"We were very excited about this performance.

"We have performed at many university events before, but this is our biggest one yet," said 22-year old Elizabeth Wong from Bentong, Pahang.

The group's effort was acknowledged when they received resounding applause from a packed crowd in front of Central Market at the end of their performance.

The association's other students also managed several booths at the event including the diabolo (Chinese yo-yo) workshop.

"This dance is called the gao yuan qing and it is a traditional Tibetan dance," explained 22-year old Chai Kah Mun, who hails from Raub, Pahang.

She is one of seven students who performed the dance, characterised by energetic, yet graceful movements of the long sleeves of their colourful costumes.

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Foreign lands

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