

Starmetro watch

ROAD CLOSURES
 ● Shah Alam City Council (MBSA) will partially close some roads for the Mawaddah Fun Run today from 7.30am to 10.30am. The roads are Jalan Platinum 7/59, Jalan Platinum 7/60, Jalan Selasih U12/9, Jalan Kristal 7/64, Jalan Kristal 7/62, and Jalan Kristal 7/63.
 ● MBSA will also close parts of Jalan Plumbum T7/T, Jalan Plumbum V7/V, Persiaran Bestari, Jalan Plumbum 7/102, Jalan Kristal 7/70, Jalan Kristal 7/66, Jalan Pegaga U12/9, Persiaran Serai Wangi, Jalan Selasih U12/24, Jalan Selasih U12/13, Jalan Platinum 7/60, Jalan Platinum 7/37, Jalan Mendapan 8/21, Persiaran Kayangan, Persiaran Dato Menteri, Persiaran Tasik, Persiaran Masjid, Persiaran Permai, Jalan Plumbum Z7/Z, and Jalan Plumbum AA7/AA on the same day, from 9pm to 11pm for the 'Kayuhan Basikal Keselamatan Kejiranan' event. For details, call MBSA at 03-5522 2734.

CHRISTMAS ACTIVITIES
 Join the Christmas merriment at Berjaya Times Square Kuala Lumpur until Dec 26, noon onwards, at Ground Central. Activities include Santa Claus and Santarina walkabout, LED fairies dance, string quartet performance and various workshops. For details, call 1-300-888-988 (customer care hotline) from 10am to 10pm daily or visit www.berjaya-timesquarekl.com.

MOBILE MBSA
 Shah Alam City Council's mobile unit 'Shah Alam On Wheels' will operate at the parking area of Tesco Setia Alam, Section U13, Shah Alam, from 11am to 5pm today. Services offered include checking and paying assessment fees and parking compounds, lodging complaints and purchasing parking coupons.

EARTH PROJECT
 Kechara Ipo Study Group will hold an Earth Project tomorrow at 9.30am in Jalan Dato Lau Pak Khuan, Ipo, Perak. Recyclable materials and items such as clothes can be donated. For details, call 016-532 8309 (So) or 012-522 3200 (Yee Mun).

CHRISTMAS EVENTS
 ● Eupe Corp Bhd will hold a Christmas charity bazaar today, from 9am to 1pm, at Taman Rekreasi Pudu Ulu, Cheras. Some 20 booths will sell food and beverages, handicrafts and baked goods. Also lined up are family-friendly activities such as pony ride and mini petting zoo. For details, call 03-7610 0636 or visit tinyurl.com/vosk3rh
 ● Metro Mall at Frazer Business Park, 1, Jalan Metro Pudu 2, Kuala Lumpur will hold a Christmas bazaar at Atrium Hall today, from 11am to 8pm. For details, call 012-5550 577 (Anson).
 ● St John's Anglican Church Ipoh will hold its Midnight Christmas Service on Dec 24 at 11pm and Christmas Day Service on Dec 25 at 9am at its premises in Jalan St John (off Jalan Panglima Bukit Gantang Wahab). For details, call 05-254 8146 or 013-772 7570 (Rev Tom Cherian).

CANCER SCREENING
 Prince Court Medical Centre and Lung Cancer Network Malaysia will give away 20 slots of free Low Dose CT Scan of the lungs and a free consultation session with a specialist. This is applicable only to individuals between 45 and 75 years who have been smoking for 20 years and above. Send your name, age, and smoking duration via WhatsApp to 011-31089499 for an appointment. Closing date is Dec 31. For details, visit www.princecourt.com.



Qin (left) and other students from UPM and APU busy making the lamb dumplings during the Winter Solstice celebration.

Gladly sweating it out for winter festival

China students enjoy making tang yuan and lamb dumplings with their Malaysian friends

By MINNOW YANG
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THE Winter Solstice Festival (or Dong Zhi in Mandarin) will be celebrated by the Chinese tomorrow.

It is one of the more important festivals that the Chinese celebrate. In fact, for some it is more important than the Lunar New Year.

The festival will see families reuniting to celebrate the season when the daytime is the shortest in a year.

Malaysia's Chinese community will celebrate it by making the delicacy synonymous to the festival — the tang yuan or glutinous rice balls.

Eating and making tang yuan represents unity.

There are many types of tang yuan, some filled with red bean paste, peanut paste or sesame paste.

The balls are served in plain or ginger syrup.

It is celebrated a little differently in China, where those from its northern region mark the festival by making meat dumplings together. The meat commonly used in the dumpling is lamb.

Ten Chinese national students from Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) and Asia Pacific University (APU) met up during a Winter Solstice celebration in Serdang.

The event was organised by UPM students and YDD Restaurant, a Chinese restaurant that is popular for its instant boiled spicy hot pot.

UPM student Qin Ziyu, 21, said Winter Solstice was as important as Spring Festival in China.

"On that day, people in south of

China will make rice balls known as tang yuan with family members.

"Tang yuan is an auspicious symbol for families coming together during winter solstice," she said.

Made from glutinous rice flour mixed with water to form balls and cooked in boiling water, tang yuan can be either small or large, filled or unfilled.

The round shape of tang yuan symbolises family unity and perfection.

Qin said that in south China, every family had to make rice balls and place them at windows and doors to worship the gods and ancestors.

Relating the tale behind the festival, she said during Chinese New Year, a poor family was begging on the streets.

"When the mother died, the father was too weak to find means to bury his wife.

"So the daughter sold herself as a servant to a rich man to get money to bury her mother.

"Before parting ways with her father, the girl promised to stick two glutinous rice balls on the front door of her new master's house for her father to locate her wherever she might be during winter.

"The following winter, the girl told her employer to place two rice balls at the door to welcome the God of Wealth, which the rich man did.

"Five years on, the father and daughter were reunited when he found the rice balls one winter.

"Not forgetting their bitter past, the father and daughter placed the rice balls on the front door every winter festival.



The lamb dumplings made by the students during the Winter Solstice celebration.

"Their custom was imitated by the neighbouring folk who wished to reunite with their long lost family members too."

Qin said people from northern China made lamb dumplings for Winter Solstice Festival.

This tradition apparently originated from a famous scientist named Zhang Zhongjing who lived during the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD).

"While on his way to his hometown in Nanyang in the Henan province one day, he saw the poor suffering from severe chilblain on their ears due to the extremely cold winter.

"He cooked dumplings with lamb and medicine to be distribut-

ed to the poor.

"Since that day, it became a tradition to eat lamb dumplings during Winter Solstice," said Qin who hails from Xian in northern China.

Speaking at the students' Winter Solstice gathering, Qin said most Chinese studying in Malaysia would go out for dinner with their friends during the festival.

"We hope that through this organised event, students from China can feel the lively winter solstice festival atmosphere even abroad," she said.

YDD restaurant owner Wong Sau Loon said he was glad to have the Chinese students over to celebrate the festival together.

"Everyone wants to be close to



Malaysian students who celebrated Winter Solstice making tang yuan balls with their Chinese friend: are (from left) So Zu Min, 23, Pearl Tan Yi Hui, 23, Goh Jing Hong, 28, and Kang Ching Khar, 20.



Giving themselves the thumbs up for making the lamb dumplings are (from left) Qin, Zong Yijie, Zhang Henquan, Bao, and Huang.

family for Winter Solstice.

"Malaysians can meet up with their family members at anytime, but that is not possible for the China students who are studying here.

"I am honoured and happy to support them with this Winter Solstice celebration," he added.

At the Winter Solstice event, students were divided into two groups, one to make lamb dumplings and the other tang yuan.

APU student Bao Yushan, 22, who has lived in Malaysia for three years, said it was the first time she participated in such a programme making dumpling and tang yuan to celebrate Winter Solstice.

"In my hometown, we eat dumplings and mutton soup during the Winter Solstice, but tang yuan is the traditional food for Lantern Festival.

"The tang yuan in Malaysia is small, it is more like dessert. In China, the tang yuan is bigger and they have either salty or sweet stuffing.

"I used to eat out with friends during Winter Solstice. This time I



Red bean-stuffed tang yuan balls.

am so happy to be able to make dumplings with friends," said Bao.

Huang Jingwen, 19, who just arrived in Malaysia, was excited to participate in the dumpling-making activity and to spend her first Winter Solstice in Malaysia.

"I don't feel homesick because I

have friends here who make me feel at home.

"The biggest difference between the Winter Solstice in Malaysia and in China is the weather," said Huang, adding that it was a first for him celebrating the festival in hot weather.



Students using chopsticks to cook the tang yuan balls in boiling water.

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