

# EVERY ENDING IS A NEW BEGINNING

Many Malaysian pilgrims have begun to make their way home after a month of haj



AZURA  
ABAS

## MAKKAH

**W**ITH the completion of the haj, it's time to bid goodbye to the Holy Land, which pilgrims had called home for more than a month.

Looking back, the haj experience was just priceless.

The heat. The crowd. The pushing. The discomfort. They were all worth it!

We learnt more about ourselves — our strengths and weaknesses. We learnt more about God's grace and the meaning of sacrifices, about the beauty, as well as the ugly side of mankind.

All these served to help us become a better Muslim.

After being away from our families for quite some time, the level of homesickness experienced by many is undoubtedly high.

Malaysian pilgrims are now in phase two of the haj operation, prepping to leave the Holy Land.

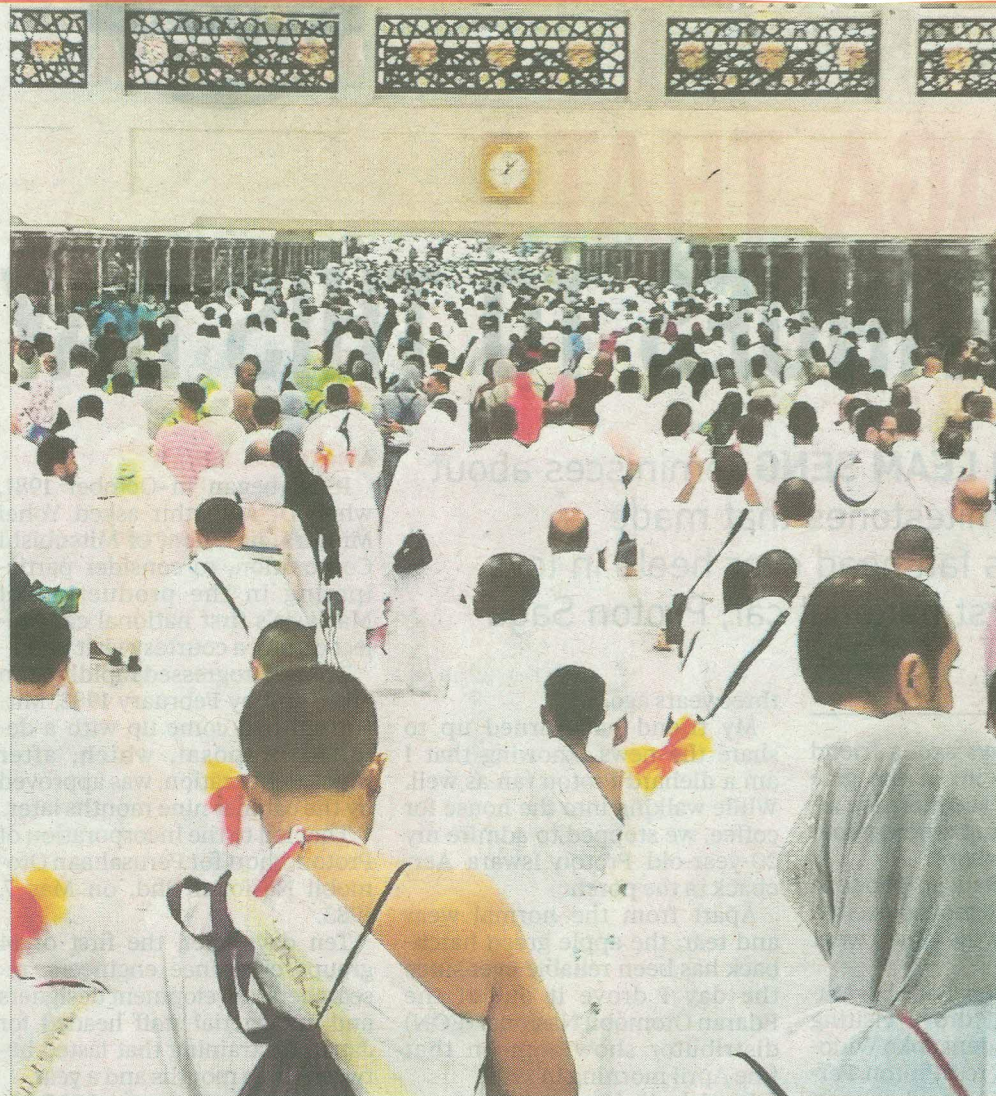
They have started to pack their things after *mashae'er* and making last-minute purchases of souvenirs.

Syahira Hamid of Putrajaya said her roommates had been busy packing as they were scheduled to leave on the first two flights from Jeddah today.

They had to pack early so that they could send their luggage for city check-in on Saturday.

"The amount of things to pack after being here for over a month is big and the activity can get quite challenging.

"Luckily, as husband and wife, we can combine our baggage al-



Pilgrims doing the 'saie' after circling the Kaabah in Makkah yesterday. PIC BY AZURA ABAS

lowance of 30kg each. My luggage weighed in at 27kg and my husband's 21kg.

"One or two of my roommates had to perform "cardiopulmonary resuscitation" on their bags in order to zip them up," she said, laughing.

For Maizura Hanim Haron, the city check-in was a blessing in disguise.

"If we were not asked to pack early, many would end up doing more shopping," she laughed, adding her luggage had reach-

ed the maximum baggage allowance of 30kg.

Rahmat Mardi said his luggage weighed only about 25kg.

"It is good to send off the heavy luggage early. It will be less of a hassle for us, as we only have to carry the hand luggage when we check in."

As you are reading this, Syahira, Maizura and Rahmat, together with about 1,000 other Malaysian pilgrims, including members of the media, are already on their way home.

As we packed our stuff to leave, we all felt a tinge of sadness.

The feeling was more profound when we did the *tawaf wada'* (the farewell *tawaf*), circling the Kaabah seven times, supplicating and bidding farewell.

On this note, with the completion of haj, I have closed one chapter of my life and opened another.

My spiritual journey will never end.

It will continue for as long as I am breathing.