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Malaysia-Global Industrial Linkages: Lifelong Learning Lessons from Xi'an Muslim Street

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Introduction

Malaysia is committed to strengthening global industrial linkages through collaborations, industry visits, and cultural exchanges. The recent Malaysia-Global Industrial Linkages trip to Xi'an, China, transformed from a formal mission into a valuable lifelong learning experience. Similar to the AURORA Collective Team (Alliance for Unified Research in Organization, Regulation, and Applied Biosciences) delegation from UiTM Negeri Sembilan, they also view Xi'an's Muslim Street as a living classroom and a platform to learn valuable lessons. The street reveals lessons in history, culture, and entrepreneurship, showing that learning continues beyond formal education.

Figure 1

Delegation from UiTM Negeri Sembilan at KLIA with the banner "Malaysia-Global Industrial Linkages" before departure to Xi'an (Author's collection, 2025).



Historical and Cultural Significance

Xi'an, formerly known as Chang'an, was the eastern terminus of the Silk Road, a route that not only carried goods but also people, ideas, and beliefs (UNWTO, 2023).

Muslim traders who settled in Xi'an left a legacy that thrives today in Muslim Street (Gladney, 1996; Dillon, 2013). This history illustrates that lifelong learning is not a static process; rather, it is an ongoing, dynamic process. It is embedded in heritage, reminding us, the current generation, that societies evolve through constant adaptation. Muslim Street demonstrates how culture remains relevant by striking a balance between continuity and innovation (Li & Wu, 2019).

Figure 2

Panoramic view of Xi'an Muslim Street (Author's collection, 2025).



Learning Through Cultural Exchange

Experiencing Muslim Street is an immersive learning experience. A visit to the street allows for engagement with vendors, the opportunity to taste halal delicacies such as roujiamo and yangrou paomo, and the observation of the vibrancy of daily life (Tourism Bureau of Xi'an, 2024). These encounters reflect how food and tradition act as vehicles of cultural education, connecting Malaysia and China through shared values (Tan & Cheung, 2020). A visit to the Great

Figure 3

Traditional Hui Muslim delicacies being prepared in open-air stalls (Author's collection, 2025).



Mosque of Xi'an reveals how Islamic faith adapted within Chinese architecture (Dillon, 2013). For lifelong learners, this demonstrates resilience, the ability to uphold traditions while embracing diversity (Embassy of PRC in Malaysia, 2024).

Economic Perspectives: SMEs as Continuous Learners

Beyond culture, Muslim Street serves as an economic hub, powered by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Thousands of stalls and shops create jobs and attract millions of visitors annually (Shao, 2020). Skills are passed across generations, but products are also adapted for modern consumers. Entrepreneurship here is a form of continuous education, innovation, experimentation, and responsiveness to change (HDC, 2023; Li & Wu, 2019). Malaysia, with its halal ecosystem and SME-driven economy, can draw lessons from Xi'an on how to sustain heritage while remaining globally competitive.

Reflections and Conclusion

Muslim Street is not just a destination; it is an effective classroom that supplies an authentic learning experience to people. The history of the Silk Road offers lessons on global exchange; the SMEs reflect adaptability and innovation; and the cultural encounters fostered empathy and respect. These experiences highlight the essence of lifelong learning: continuous improvement, cultural awareness, and resilience. The Malaysia–Global Industrial Linkages trip underscores that while trade and industry foster formal partnerships, cultural encounters provide the human dimension necessary for sustainable cooperation (Zhang & Wang, 2021; UNWTO, 2023).

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