



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement

3 April 2020

Ban Ramadhan bazaars this year for the public's safety

Despite the COVID-19 disease that is currently plaguing our country, many states still maintain that Ramadhan bazaars will be allowed to operate. The Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) is completely against any Ramadhan bazaars operating this year as it would completely defeat the purpose of the social distancing we have been practicing and puts peoples' lives at risk.

Ramadhan begins towards the end of April (23 April 2020) and according to the Ministry of Health as well as third party experts there could be a surge in COVID-19 cases in the middle of April as it is predicted that the disease will reach its peak in Malaysia then. However how long does the peak of a viral disease even last? It could be a day or a week, or even longer than that. The timeline between the predicted peak in COVID-19 cases in our country and the beginning of Ramadhan is too close for comfort.

Furthermore, the excuse that the government is thinking about the welfare of the urban people by letting the Ramadhan bazaars carry on as usual is a weak one at best. If the government is worried about urban people not having time to cook after coming home from work, then there are other things that can be done such as providing a catering system for urban folk. The government could also provide them with financial aid so that they can order from food delivery services. It is important that the government think of a better way to help urban people that will allow for less contact between people.

For those who believe that since restaurants are still allowed to operate then the Ramadhan bazaars should also be allowed to operate, but it would not be accurate to compare the two. The situations at Ramadhan bazaars are more like wet markets and night markets than restaurants. There are usually a huge number of people moving about the area at the same time. Even if the authorities were to put restrictions in place there is no guarantee that they will be followed. We have clearly seen this happen at a few wet markets that were forced to close as they did not follow the restrictions that were set out. There is a high chance that this will also happen at the Ramadhan bazaars if they operate.

In view of the COVID-19 pandemic CAP calls on the Malaysian Government to ban all Ramadhan bazaars this year and to establish a better way to assist the urban folk during this year's Ramadhan. Additionally, the government should assist Ramadhan bazaar traders who will be losing their main source of income this year by including them in the COVID-19 stimulus package.

If the government can make the crucial decision to ban Friday prayers in mosque for our safety, then certainly they can ban Ramadhan bazaars which are of less importance.

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