



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Press Statement

1 July 2016

CELEBRATING EID-al-FITR, AVOID EXTRAVAGANCE

We are in the last few days of Ramadhan when Muslims are required to spend more time in prayer, introspection and giving charity. Regrettably, they are bombarded with advertisements to buy and consume more. “*Hari Raya Sales*”, “*Raya Ni Mesti Cun, Jualan Hebat up to 50%*” are some of the advertisements to tempt consumers.

Advertising sales without misleading consumers and violating regulations may be acceptable. What is objectionable is linking sales promotion to Eid-al-Fitr celebration. It desacralises a highly spiritual event. What are the authorities and the Ulama doing? They need to take firm action to stop this desacralisation of Islam.

According to the portal *Al-Islam.org*: “*Eid-ul-Fitris is a unique festival. It has no connection with any historical event nor is it related to the changes of seasons or cycles of agriculture. It is not a festival related in any way to worldly affairs.*”

Its significance is purely spiritual. It is the day when the Muslims thank Allah for having given them the will, the strength and the endurance to observe fast and obey His commandment during the holy month of Ramadhan.

This day, in Muslim world, brings rejoicing and happiness. The rejoicing is not, however, at the departure of the month of Ramadhan; it is the happiness which man feels after successfully completing an important task.”

In celebrating Eid-Al-Fitr Muslims are required to practice moderation and avoid sinful activities. Allah swt has commanded us not to squander our wealth but to do charity. In the holy Qu’ran, Allah exhorts and warns: “*And give his due to the near of kin as well as to the needy and the wayfarer, but do not squander (thy substance) senselessly. Behold, the squanderers are, indeed, of the ilk of the satans – in as much as Satan has indeed proved most ungrateful to his Sustainer.*” [Surah-Al-Isra’, verses 26, 27]

Many Muslims – the wealthy, elite, the ‘*orang kaya baru*’ – have violated these commandments and indulge in wasteful, conspicuous consumption even during Ramadhan. They spend lavishly decorating their homes, purchasing expensive furniture, curtains, clothes, watches and other personal items. While the average income of our rakyat is less than RM2000.00 per month the handbags of the ‘*orang kaya baru*’ ladies could be worth over RM20,000.00.

The ostentatious lifestyle of the wealthy has negative effects on, and permeates to, the other layers of society. The lower income groups try to imitate the rich, over consume, live beyond their means and become heavily indebted. Financial problems create tension in families which could lead to the break-up of marriages where children become the victims.

Wealth in Islam is considered to be a gift from God to be held in trust. It is not to be squandered in ostentatious living but to improve and empower the community, and to help the poor, the needy and the marginalized wherever they may be.

Poverty is widespread in the world, particularly in many Muslim states. Over 2 billion people are poor, living from hand to mouth. In Syria, Iraq and other countries, devastated by wars and conflicts, tens of millions of people are internally displaced living in hovels, or are refugees living in refugee camps. They do not have adequate food, clothing, education, healthcare and other basic needs. In this state of the Ummah, is it not a sin and a crime for the wealthy to flaunt their wealth in conspicuous consumption?

Having open houses during Eid-al-Fitr is peculiar to the Muslim community in Malaysia who are at the bottom of the income ladder compared to other communities. No other community here has such practice. Traditionally, after prayer, people visited the homes of their neighbours, friends and relatives to offer greetings, *sembang-sembang*, and partake of simple *kuih*, *ketupat*, *lemang* and drinks.

Today it's very different. Open-houses of organisations, political parties and politician, corporations and the wealthy provide a widespread of rich foods and drinks and even some entertainment. A lot of food is also wasted. Putting an economic value to them, it would run to millions of ringgit. Wouldn't it be more beneficial if this money is used to provide scholarships for poor children or homes for the homeless?

Celebrations on a modest scale can be organized by Muslim and non-Muslim residents in their neighbourhoods that would promote greater understanding, unity and brotherhood among them. We appeal to the Muslims to remember the spiritual significance of Eid-al-Fitr and avoid extravagance and waste.

Selamat Hari Raya Maaf Zahir Batin.

S. M. Mohamed Idris
President
Consumers Association of Penang