



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Letter to the Editor

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Ramadhan – Avoid waste and practice charity

During Ramadhan, for about eleven years, CAP has been carrying out campaigns against waste, overindulgence and extravagance which Islam and other religions condemn.

The campaign was initiated by our late president Allahyarham S.M. Mohammed Idris who was horrified by the large amount of food waste and the extravagant spending of the Muslim elite during this holy month while millions of people have no adequate food, shelter, education and healthcare.

Ramadhan is supposed to be a month of intense devotion for Muslims but for some, it has become a month of feasting and wasteful spending. Islam enjoins its followers to avoid gluttony, waste and extravagance.

Contrary to this teaching, some people eat and drink so much that they become lazy and neglect to perform even their obligatory prayers. Gluttony also has serious adverse health effects – diabetes, coronary diseases, and hypertension - on those indulging in it.

Iftar, breaking fast, traditionally in the home with family members or in the mosque in a spiritual environment, has been turned into a “feast with a 100-dish spread” in hotels and restaurants. It has been turned into a source of profits for these enterprises.

Excessive varieties and quantities of food prepared for *iftar* and *sahur* leads to waste. A lot of food is thrown away by hotels and families into the waste dumps. Solid Waste and Public Cleansing Corporation (SWCorp) reported, in 2016, that every Ramadhan 200,000 tonnes of food goes straight into the rubbish bins. This quantity of food could feed 180 million people.

Throwing away food is a sin as it deprives food for the needy ones and the future generation. It also depletes resources and contributes to environmental degradation through the pollution of seas and rivers and the discharge of carbon dioxide, which is responsible for global warming.

One of the objects of fasting is to feel the pain of hunger experienced by the poor and marginalized so that we will have empathy for them. Millions of people in Syria, Yemen, Iraq, Palestine, Myanmar, India, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Pakistan and Afghanistan are facing starvation and yet we are throwing away huge quantities of food in the holy month.

The rich should share their wealth with the poor and needy instead of indulging in an ostentatious way of life. Use your wealth to uplift the poor and marginalized out of poverty and oppression and support worthy causes.

The campaigns had achieved limited success and received support from the community and religious leaders and even some politicians. We are continuing the campaign and appealing to the public to make charitable contributions to CAP as its activities are to empower the people to build a just, equitable and caring society.

Consumers Association of Penang (CAP) was founded in 1970 and registered as a society under the Societies Act 1966. CAP's mission is to promote social justice, sustainable development and environmental protection. It is a non-profit organisation depending on voluntary contributions to carry out its work.

CAP has been recognized nationally and internationally as a pioneering social organisation with a unique vision. Its activities involve fighting for fair prices and good quality of goods and services as well as educating consumers to be responsible, prevent waste, live simply, and manage incomes to live within their own means and not fall victim to the debt trap.

It has been at the forefront of creating environmental protection consciousness among the people, officials, and policymakers, and urging the government to introduce legislation to protect the environment and prevent pollution. For over five decades, it has been combatting social ills like alcoholism, gambling and smoking.

It has produced publications for educating Muslim consumers on Haram-Halal issues with regard to products and services. Empowerment of the Qariah community so that it will take control of and be responsible for the cleanliness, activities, and unity in its area is one important component of CAP's work.

CAP has been called for consultation by government ministries and departments when formulating socio-economic and environmental policies. International Islamic University Malaysia and Tun Razak Foundation conferred awards on CAP in recognition of its contribution to society.

Let us resolve to make this Ramadhan more meaningful and spiritually enriching. Avoid breaking fast in hotels and, instead, breakfast (iftar) in your homes or mosque with your family members and friends. Invite your non-Muslim neighbours to breakfast with you. In this way, we build goodwill and understanding among Malaysians.

Mohideen Abdul Kader
President
Consumers Association of Penang