



WAKTU BERBUKA PUASA



Imsak
05:46 AM

Maghrib
19:20 PM

Rumah Bersih & Teratur, Ibadah Saat Ramadan
Selamat Menyambut Ramadan Al-Mubarak

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Going back to 'old' normal



By [Dzulkifli Abdul Razak](#) - April 23, 2020 @ 12:05am



Pasar Ramadan, or 'Param', as it is fondly known, attracts a huge crowd as it features a galore of food and cuisine every year. -NSTP File pic

MUCH has been said about the “new” normal. What it is exactly is difficult to tell. To some, it is a different way of doing, or refraining, relative to the “old” way. For example, shaking hands. In many cultures, the handshake is a “new” normal.

Many Eastern cultures do not practise it until they’re “civilised” by colonial powers of the past. Now, those former powers find it convenient to abstain from it, thanks to Covid-19. And we have to comply once again. In short, for us, it is just back to the way it used to be, culturally. Nothing really “new” is taking place. In fact, it is the reverse.

There are other examples that could be argued in the same way. Ramadan highlights some of them. Before the blessed month was “hijacked” by commercial interests, especially the hospitality industry (now losing billions of ringgit), the normal was simple and straightforward. But of late,

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For those who are not sold to such advertisements, they resort to other lavish ways. Generally, overbuying for the breaking of fast, plus putting oneself at a higher risk of being exposed to an overcrowded gathering while jostling for food from vendors.

This is where the traditional Pasar Ramadan comes in, or “Param”, as it is fondly known. It is a unique feature of the year, which presents a galore of food and cuisine, thus, explaining the huge crowd from all walks of life.

“Params” are well spread out over the country, making them easily accessible, raising serious doubt if the practice of social distancing is accorded the importance attached to it by the various authorities, including the World Health Organisation. Virtual or online alternatives are being considered, for instance, as reported by the Selangor government in pushing for an e-bazaar.

Whatever the outcome, Param will depart greatly from what it used to be. The most challenging is when it comes to the habit of food “hunting-and-gathering”. Many will throng Param in search of their favourites and, at the same time, trying out what is new. They will bring back “loads” in excess of what is needed quite unintentionally. What is sure is that the goal of being frugal and prudent will end up in the bin.

But, “thanks” to Covid-19, given the circumstances, Ramadan still has a good chance to succeed because one is forced to reflect deeply on what is going on. The moral lesson behind it, namely, is reinstating the balance which has long been upset by sheer greed and gullibility due the raw power of commercialisation.

What Covid-19 has managed to do is to halt excesses, or at least, prick the collective conscience in the name of Ramadan to empathise and be compassionate to the less fortunate. This is no doubt a powerful reminder for all in that there is an urgent need to recalibrate the practices during Ramadan, notably in relation to Param.

This not about creating a “new” normal as insisted, instead it is about returning to the “old” ones, valued based on moderation, empathy and compassion. Only by mending the obnoxious bad habits can we expect to arrive at a meaningful post-Covid Ramadan in a healing way for all humanity. Wishing for a blessed Ramadan.

The writer, an NST columnist for more than 20 years, is International Islamic University Malaysia rector

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