

RAMADAAN OUTSIDE THE COMFORT ZONE

This weekend ushers in the blessed month of Ramadaan of the Islamic year 1441. It signals the annual commencement of an important pillar of Islam i.e. the institution of Fasting. A month-long disciplined regimen of abstention from food, drink and conjugal relationship between dawn and sunset, with additional prayers undertaken and deeds of charity increased. Fasting was prescribed by Allah Almighty to the Noble Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and the Prophets (peace be upon them) that preceded him.

From the first flicker of the light of Islam on the sands of the Arabian Peninsula, the message of Islam in fourteen hundred years radiated all over the world. It extended to almost every country on earth and Muslims today are of all nationalities, speak many languages and account for a quarter of mankind.

With its progress to lands near and far over the ages, local customs and traditions influenced how the joyous event of the preparation, welcoming of Ramadaan, the breaking of the fast and additional prayer is undertaken.

In South Africa the arrangements for the recitation of the Quraan for congregational prayers nightly, the provision of the breaking of the fast at home and in Musaaajid (mosques), the ramping up of special related programmes on community radio stations, special lectures, distribution of food hampers to the poor etc. are the order of the day. So too are many activities perpetuated by tradition and not religion such as the sumptuous iftaar tables with an array of traditional fries and pastries, the choice of restaurants with special Halaal offerings, the socializing and indoor soccer games of youngsters and the family get-togethers on the weekends.

Ramadaan is like the welcoming embrace of a dear friend from childhood – warm, reliable, familiar and with shared memories. It is our own comfort zone.

Now in a rude awakening the comfort zone has been invaded. What we have is a stranger personified by the unknown. This Ramadaan will be like no other ever experienced in our lifetime. The prospects of all the activities of joy and hospitality of the event looks bleak while our country wrestles with the COVID-19 pandemic with its death, destruction and the nation confined to their homes. Is this a precursor of doom and gloom?

It is easy to get discouraged in the face of difficulties. For a Believer however, his assurance is in the unshakeable belief that, “Allah does not burden a soul beyond that it can bear”

(Chapter 2: Verse 286) and if that is not enough then the rich Islamic history of achievements of our ancestors should inspire us to soar above the valley of despair. Spare a thought and lift our hands in duas (prayers) of gratitude for the foundations laid by the Companions (may Allah be pleased with them) of the Prophet (peace be upon him) their successors and our ancestors.

They left the safety of their comfort zones and undertook arduous and hazardous journeys to deliver the Message in far off places. Their successors in turn journeyed further to new lands without the things that we now yearn for during the lockdown. They had no automatic citizenship, freedom of movement, Musaaajid (mosques), access to Halaal food outlets, social services, or schools etc. Despite all these trials and tribulations, they strived tirelessly and bequeathed us a great legacy, the fruits of which we enjoy today.

Look at the unexpected positive lessons from the lockdown:-

Working from home means no downtime and the aggravation of being stuck in traffic.

Quality time to spend with the family for praying together and recreation.

Empathy and understanding from the broader citizenry on the concept of fasting as it is undertaken during the difficulties of the lockdown affecting all.

Realization of the value and dedication of Halaal certification services. Halaal products are still manufactured and available. Our services to the industry continues even in these difficult times.

Appreciation on the supply of goods and dignity of the worker at all levels – from domestic workers, refuse collectors, shelf packers, health workers etc.

The convenience of online shopping and door to door deliveries.

A reset moment to reflect on life and our purpose of serving the Creator.

On behalf of all our member organisations, officials, staff and friends, we wish you a fulfilling Ramadaan of safety, peace, prayer, good health and spiritual transformation, Aameen.

RAMADAAN MUBAARAK

Any queries pertaining to the above or any other aspect of Halaal may be referred to our offices

Halaal Helpline 0861 786 111