General

Ramadan during MCO, “A Blessing In Disguise”

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Kuantan, 6 May 2020 - Muslims in this country and all around the globe will be practicing Ramadan in the new normal situation, due to the implementation of Movement Control Order (MCO) following the spread of COVID-19 pandemic.

In the past, days before the start of Ramadan, highways across the country would have been crowded with motorists returning to their hometowns to commence fasting with the loved ones. But this time things are a bit different, with MCO still being enforced by the government, the roads are strangely quiet.

No interstate movement is allowed and the public is not permitted to return to their hometowns to celebrate Aidilfitri during the MCO period to prevent the spread of the deadly virus.

When asked about Ramadan this year, Senior Executive of Institute of Post Graduate Studies (IPS), Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP), Shahrizai Haji Sarif said, one thing that he missed the most about Ramadan, was not being able to go to the mosque and surau to perform Tarawih prayers.

“Now, performing Tarawih prayers with the family in this Holy Month of Ramadan 1441 will be remembered as the most memorable and invaluable experience, due the outbreak of Covid-19”, he added.

"As what our religion thought us, we should all be calm, patience and embrace it while conforming to the MCO and rules that has been set by the authorities," he elaborates further.

He added, if planned and organized properly, various activities can be done with the family.

“Another unique feature of Ramadan in Kuantan is the breaking fast activity at the Kuantan Municipal Council (MPK) field.

“This activity has been a tradition in Kuantan for over 20 years. Even without Ramadan bazaars, the excitement of breaking fast can still be felt with the variety of meals provided at home.

"The meals can be shared and enjoyed with each family members, hence can avoid food wastage," he added.

In the meantime, he said, with high discipline, the new norms of life could be implemented comprehensively at every age of life.

He believes the management of UMP is providing a clear guideline for implementing the new normal - the Post MCO Era to ensure that all Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) pertaining to safety, health and hygiene aspects are complied by every staff covering different level of job scope in the university.

Sharing his work from home (WFH) experience, Shahrizai believes that high discipline and time management is very important especially for female staff to ensure both the office works and household chores are well managed, organized and delivered during this period of MCO.

Likewise, Deputy Dean (Research & Graduate Studies), Faculty of Civil Engineering Technology, Associate Professor Dr. Azrina Abd Aziz said, this year Ramadan is more meaningful and she values the differences it brings, as she get to spend more time with her family than ever before, due to her high commitment to work.

“Working from home gives more flexibility where I can plan my schedule between office matters and household chores.

“Being less tired, I have more time and opportunities to perform religious activities during this month of Ramadan.

“COVID-19 pandemic is a new global challenges that has changed the norms of human life which requires a greater attention to health and hygiene.

“Furthermore, cleanliness is one of the most important aspects in Islam.

"Nevertheless, may this Ramadan be the best Ramadan for us. Use this opportunity to do self-reflection on what we have become,” she added.

Meanwhile, Senior Executive, University Entrepreneurship Center (PKUS), Noor Syahidah Sabran said, when Ramadan came around, she would rush her way back from the office to prepare for iftar with families.

She added, this year Ramadan gives her more flexibility where she can plan and organize activities more efficiently, cook her favorite menu and even try new recipes. Previously, she just buy at Ramadan bazaars due to time constraints.

“What’s more interesting in this Ramadan, I re-organized my living room to become a dedicated place for tarawih prayers and also ordered a custom made bunting with tarawih prayers guideline for reference.

“MCO has made online purchasing and delivery service more popular, besides adding new contacts, get to know the neighbors and even making new networks through various groups from the WhatsApp application,” she elaborates further.

Furthermore, among the benefits she gained from this year Ramadan is on time management and organization of activities efficiently. She also has the opportunity to improve her understanding on the use of online Zoom application, Google Meet and other related application that is related to conduct online discussions and meetings.

“Thus, Muslims are called to carry out all their ibadah (religious activities) and other Ramadan tradition at home to, among others, strengthen family ties by preparing their own meals for iftar and sahur (pre-dawn meal) and praying with family members.

“As a responsible citizen, we are obliged to stay at home and adhere to MCO that has entered its fifth phase,” she added.

For all one knows, Ramadan this year the fights are not only confined to the worldly desires like greed, envy, hunger, thirst and lust, but also against the COVID-19 virus that has plagued many lives around the world.

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