

GST or no GST, Muslims still buy dates for Ramadan
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By Zalinah Noordin

GEORGETOWN, Less than 24 hours to go, Muslims all over the world will be observing the holy month of Ramadan that will see them fasting from dawn to dusk. It will also see many flocking to the stores today to get their last minute Ramadan provisions.

One of the obligatory items is dates or “kurma”.

Despite increased prices due to the newly introduced Goods and Services Tax (GST), many Muslims have been seen making their last-minute purchases at shops selling dates in Penang Street here.

One shop owner, Mohamed Meera Sahib, who is also the director of Mohamed Meera Sahib (M) Sdn Bhd, said that GST was only added to retail prices

“If it used to be RM10 per box of 500g and now it costs RM10.60. The sales of dates is not affected,” he said when met at his shop.

He added that the shop has also seen increase of about 500 customers for the past two weeks.

Another shop owner, Shaik Dawood Firdaus, said his shop has ordered some 25 tonnes of dates consisting of various brands from the Middle East to cater to the huge demand during the fasting month.

“We sell more than 50 types of dates here, including the Mariami, Safarni, Oman, Kas and Lulu.

“The price of dates depends on its quality and its origin; the most expensive can cost up to RM100 per kilogramme while the cheapest is RM6 per kg,” he said.

His regular customer, Hamzah Hassan, 60, who was seen buying dates at the shop, said that one kilogramme can last his small family for a week.

“It is slightly more expensive this year, but we still buy because Ramadan will be incomplete without dates.

“We break our fast with dates and even have our sahur with dates, just like Prophet Muhammad,” he told The Rakyat Post.

He said eating dates to break fast is better than eating a full meal as one of the many physical benefits of breaking the fast with dates is that our body benefits from the date’s high level of natural sugars.

“Eating large quantities of food immediately after fasting is not healthy for the body, which is in a weakened condition.

“Eating a date first helps the body start its digestive process and gives it the energy to deal with the secondary, more complex foods, eaten during iftar,” explained Hassan.

Dates are also high in vitamins A and B6, folic acid, potassium, natural sodium, iron and magnesium.

“It is like a natural source of multi-vitamin,” he added.

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