

https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=3178626062244143&id=163726347067478 Letter to Editor 6 December, 2020 **Initiate Dialogue on the Issue of Supermarket's Non-Halal Section in Puncak Alam**

We refer to the matter of the Jaya Grocer outlet in Eco Grandeur, Puncak Alam said to be selling alcohol in its non-halal section. It was reported by The Rakyat Post dated 4 December that a memorandum had been sent to the management of the outlet to protest the sale of alcohol in the store. The sending of the memorandum follows protests said to have been initiated by the residents associations in the area and consented to by Selangor Assemblyman Mohd Shaid Rosli (PEJUANG-Jeram).

Amongst the reasons for the protest in the memorandum were the need to respect "the sensitivities of the 90% Muslim population of Puncak Alam" and complaints of "social crimes and fractured family relationships from drinking alcohol."

While not denying the severity of alcoholism in its tendencies to contribute towards crime and impact on other social relationships, Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM) would like to draw attention to the fact that Malaysia is a country of multicultural make-up comprising of various ethnic groups of different religious persuasions. Added to this is the diverse cultures and practices each ethnic and religious group brings to their respective ways of life.

Such diverse cultural belongings and practices extend to simple matters such as food and drinks as well.

Hence, to issue a protest against a retail outlet which seeks to cater to a broad section of the community in the service of food and drink is therefore uncalled for. It must be borne in mind that in any community of residence in Malaysia, there are always a broad section of people with different lifestyle and taste towards food and drink.

These groups of people may constitute the majority or minority in a given location. But their

needs and what they feel as the norm in lifestyles and practices while not fully understandable or appreciated by everyone must likewise be accorded full respect and acceptance. To do this is what is meant by a peaceful co-existence in a multi-cultural setting of diverse population and proportion as we seek to interact and come together as fellow Malaysians.

In the case of the majority Muslim residents of Puncak Alam, if there are concerns as to the sensitivity or even the impact of alcoholism on the wellbeing and safety of the community, a better and more appropriate response would have been for the Assemblyman of Jeram, Mohd Shaid Rosli to initiate a dialogue between the management of Jaya Grocer and the residents associations rather than insisting they do not sell the goods and for the entrance of the non-halal section to be boarded up.

Such an approach of peaceful dialogue towards an amicable solution represents not only a win-win situation for everyone but also a moderation with respect to the concerns and sensitivity of the majority of residents while allowing space for the minority residents to still enjoy their lifestyle and practices. It is an approach that enjoins all to humility and one which does not display a "holier than thou" attitude of superiority over others. It is built upon the respect for human dignity that accord to every human being equality to dwell on this earth to live a quiet and pleasurable life in honour to Allah. Furthermore, Allah has enjoined upon the Muslims to be a "middle nation" or a "justly balanced and moderate nation" in the Quran. It is a path that brings together a harmonious balance between religion and the world and between individual and community.

We would call on the respected Assemblyman of Jeram, Mohd Shaid Rosli to quickly initiate this dialogue between the management of Jaya Grocer and the residents' associations so as to quell any unhappiness that may arise and to avoid racial and religious discrimination that would polarised our already fragile society further.

A sensible and moderate approach to such issues is clearly needed as it will benefit no one should conflicts in any form and nature arises. Malaysians are already facing much undue hardship in many respects and unimaginable ways during this unprecedented phenomenon of

the Covid-19 pandemic. We certainly do not need any added discomfort coming along in this manner.

Badlishah Sham Baharin,

Chair,

Gabungan Bertindak Malaysia (GBM)

For and on behalf of the Executive Council, GBM