



Strengthening faith and social bonds

Ramadan



The name of the ninth month of the Islamic calendar, the word “Ramadan”, is derived from the Arabic root “rmd”, which refers to intense heat, scorched ground and shortness of rations. As the Islamic calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, the dates of Ramadan on the Gregorian calendar change from year to year. This year,

Ramadan started on the 12th of August and will end on either the 9th or the 10th of September, depending on the visibility of the moon.

Ramadan is the month of ritual fasting for Muslims, and is one of the five fundamental pillars of Islam (see inset). From sunrise to sunset during that time, adult Muslims are expected to abstain from food, drink, and sexual activities. Pregnant women, women who are menstruating, the elderly and sick people are exempted from the fast, on condition that

they make up the number of days they have missed at a later date. If they are unable to make up for the missed days, they are to pay the fidya as compensation for each day missed, which will feed a poorer person twice a day. It is told that long ago, having nothing to eat during one period of severe famine, some poor people asked for food from the rich. Pitilessly, the rich gave just a little portion of food to those starving people. As a result, Allah ordered that everyone should fast during the month of Ramadan. The aim was to teach values such as mercy to believers, and until now the month is one where it is required of Muslims to help the poor and the needy.

Thus, “Ramadan is not just a month of fasting, it is also about purifying both body and soul,” indicates Nissar Ramtoolah, president of the Jumma Mosque. This excerpt from a message from Imaam Muhyi-ud-Din Munir A. Azim, published in L'Express on the 12th of August, echoes the previous sentiment: “[...]Moreover, the Muslim is commanded to act and speak in accordance with

the prescriptions of the Almighty, in that he must behave in the most appropriate manner so as not to nullify his sawm by indulging in evils, such as gossip, backbiting, mischief, vain talk, smoking, laziness, and all kinds of immoral activities.” Thus, Ramadan is intended for self-betterment and getting closer to God. In addition, Muslims are encouraged to read the entire Qu’ran during the month of Ramadan, through “Tarawih”. The “Tarawih” is a special prayer of the month of Ramadan performed at night, after the last prayer of the day is completed. By the end of the month, the complete scripture of 30 chapters is expected to have been recited.

Ramadan necessitates special preparation. Since the fast lasts from sunrise to sunset, Muslims wake up before dawn to have the first meal of the day, the sehri, which will have to provide them with enough sustenance to last through the day. They then do not touch food or drink until the sun sets, when they break their fast with a meal called iftar. Since Islam is a religion and not a

Since 12th August, Muslims around the world have been following the Ramadan fast. More than just abstaining from food and drink, Ramadan is a time for getting closer to God.