

Madinah Ramadhan: *One of A Kind*

The purpose of this article is to keep people and visitors of Kota Bharu updated on the tourism events and developments related to the city.

History & Background

Kelantan has been a center of education and Islamic studies since the late 19th century (Saad&Radzi, 2015) which led to the title of *Serambi Mekah* with the classes of study originally dedicated to the Royals but later disseminated and opened to the public through the mosque, surau and balaisah (Nik Muhammad Nik Mohd Salleh, 1985). This condition has benefited locals through the arrival of preachers who came to teach Islam in Kelantan. Even this opportunity has attracted students from Southeast Asia to study religious knowledge. The function of Kelantan as a center of Islamic education and studies proves that Islam has been accepted by the whole society. Even one of the main thrusts of Kota Bharu City's formation as the Islamic City, 5 Kaf is the Knowledge.

Madinah Ramadhan is the largest annual program organized by the Kota Bharu Islamic City Council (MPKB-BRI) together with the Kelantan State Government which this program actually started in 1992 was the brainchild of the late Dato' Bentara Setia Tuan Guru Haji Nik Abdul Aziz bin Nik Mat, former Chief Minister of Kelantan (1990-2013). Previously known as *Ihya Ramadhan* and *Qaryah Ramadhan* before being upgraded to *Madinah Ramadhan* was originally a tarawih prayer program organized around the 'Padang Bas' at the edge of the bus station to facilitate urban residents and travelers to perform their Tarawih prayers during Ramadhan.

Below: Opening Ceremony (photo by MPKB-BRI)



Programme & Recognition

Madinah which means *the city* is a symbol of the program's success since its inception in the past 25 years. An online poll which was conducted by MPKB-BRI on the official website www.ihyaramadhan.net this year showed that 62% of visitors were satisfied with the organization of the event. This proves that *Madinah Ramadhan* receives strong public support.

Quran Recitation is a newly introduced program, which is a reading session and interpretation of *Manhaj Haraki* focusing on Command and Prohibitions (*Awamir & Nawahi*) by qualified *qari* leaders who are invited during the month of Ramadhan, with a one-day reading of one *juzuk* held every day from 9.00 am to 1.00 pm, and successful (full month) attendees will be awarded the certificate of participation in recognition of the Council. *Iftar* dishes are provided free of charge daily for those who break their fast at the tent. Visitors are fed with dates; desserts (*kuih*) and drinks, then perform Maghrib prayers first before having dinner (*nasi bungkus*) that will be distributed after the congregation prayers. After the *Ishyak* prayer, the Tarawih prayer begins with a *tazkirah* break after two greetings. Other events such as khat and speech competitions, seminars to enhance the Qur'an reading through tajwid and tarannum classes for adults, youth stage performances, welfare assistance for those in need and so on. Al-Quran relay, tadarus, qiamullail and zikir have become the self-therapy music throughout the last month of Ramadhan, attracting visitors to *i'tikaf* here.

With total participation of 1,000 people each night and state government commitments, local councils, multinational sponsorships and sincere donations from the public, it is no surprise that the program is recognized as the Best 2013 Festival in the Tourism Promotion Organization (TPO) ranked Asia Pacific in Daejon, South Korea.

Left: Prostrate to the Almighty (photo by @amazingKelantan)
Below: Landscaping with Oasis concept (photo by pddcgroup.blogspot.my)



This event is a symbolic of the spirit of volunteerism, sincerity, generosity cooperation and brotherhood. These features have been embodied through the involvement of nearly 300 volunteers known as *Amilin* and *Amilat* (Islamic City Volunteers) as well as the contributions of traders from various restaurants and stalls who donate their food packages for fasting, as well as sponsorship in the form of money, material, Quranic books, machinery, tools, etc. All Muslims seize the opportunity to gain benefits from this noble month as recommended by the 'fastabiqul khairat' recorded in the Qur'an

Suggestions & Conclusion

The *Madinah Ramadhan* program is recognized as the best program to highlight the Ramadhan special features, as well as a platform for delivering various messages to educate the community. Therefore, programs for various levels of society within and outside the State of Kelantan through various promotional media should be initiated at the beginning of the year and included in the "must visit" tour calendar in the State of Kelantan during the month of Ramadhan. There are also questions of how this program can reduce 'community illness' and educate the public to comply with Islamic teachings and so on. Therefore, empirical studies need to be carried out to overcome the weaknesses of the program and to identify more potent and targeted goals. This is to ensure that the objective of the program will be achieved and the messages delivered throughout the program will reach the hearts of the residents and visitors to be true Servants of God, insyaAllah ☺



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