

*Editorial Note*

## Covid-19 Pandemic: A Blessing In Disguise

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### Main Text

The year 2020 was taken over by a global pandemic with a newly identified coronavirus 2019-nCoV (now known as COVID-19 virus) sweeping across continents since its emergence in December 2019 (Letchumanan *et al.*, 2019). The first COVID-19 case was reported in Wuhan, one of the districts in the People's Republic of China. It most probably had originated from a market selling and serving exotic and endangered animal species such as bats, snakes, rats, etc. The genome sequence of this novel coronavirus has been deposited in the GenBank as reported by Letchumanan *et al.* (2019).

In Islamic perspective, Covid-19 can be considered as one of the diseases that can affect human health. Prior to this, people worldwide were infected with diseases such as H1N1, JE, cholera, tuberculosis and malaria. Infection and death, on a global scale, are not new. Basically, all of these diseases appeared due to the over exploitations by the human lifestyle; people neglecting the environmental ecosystem, eating exotic and unhealthy food, producing waste and pollutants from industries, and so on.

An Islamic legal maxim has stated that prevention is better than cure. This is the reason why Allah SWT has prohibited anything that leads to over exploitation of the world's ecosystem and its consequent damage. Everything created by Allah SWT needs to be in a balanced state (*wassatiyyah*). So, it is unnecessary to consume food for the sake of eating, other than for the protection of life (*hifz al-nafs*). In Islamic teachings, protection of life includes consuming '*Halalan*' and '*Tayyiban*' food. Hence, Allah SWT instructs man not be do things which could bring his own destruction. In the al-Quran, Allah SWT said "*and do not throw [yourselves] with your [own] hands into destruction*" (al-Quran 2: 195).

Besides, we should avoid anything that can be harmful (*madharrah*) to life, such as not avoiding going to places that have an outbreak of the plague. According to Usamah bin Zaid, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said, "*If you get wind of the outbreak of plague in a land, do not enter it; and if it breaks out in a land in which you are, do not leave it*" (Narrated by Bukhari, 5728).

In addressing the issue, Islam preaches, since its inception 1400 years ago, on the prohibition of eating non-Halal animals. In the al-Quran, Allah SWT says: “*He hath forbidden you only carrion, and blood, and swine flesh, and that which hath been immolated to (the name of) any other than Allah. But he who is driven by necessity, neither craving nor transgressing, it is no sin for him. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful*” (al-Quran 2:173). This prohibition would save man from consuming harmful food.

In Islam, people are only allowed to consume ‘*Halalan*’ and ‘*Tayyiban*’ products (al-Teinaz *et al.*, 2020). In the al-Quran, Allah SWT stated: “*O mankind, eat from whatever is on earth [that is] lawful and good and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy*” (al-Quran 2:168). While in another verse, Allah SWT says: “*O messengers, eat from the good foods and work righteousness. Indeed, I, of what you do, am Knowing*” (al-Quran 23:51).

Furthermore, everything which are prohibited in Islam is due to the reason (*al-illah*). Regarding to the issue of Covid-19 virus, all the exotic animals from the wet market in Wuhan such as bats, snake, rats and all reptile’s family are non-Halal. The reasoning behind the prohibition of these animals as stated in al-Quran is because they are the source of what is considered as *khabaith* (impure). In the al-Quran, Allah SWT says: “*...for he (the Prophet) commands them what is just and forbids them what is evil; he allows them as lawful what is good (and pure) and prohibits them from what is bad (and impure)...*” (al-Quran 7: 157). Accordingly, it is important for people to have more insight and awareness on the guidelines of ‘*Halalan Tayyiban*’ in consuming safe and healthy food.

Therefore, understanding of the *Halalan Tayyiban* guidelines due to the Covid-19 disease include eating only Halal-slaughtered animals according Shariah principles, avoiding area of infection when the disease appeared, having a good hygiene routine, consuming and producing only *Halalan Tayyiban* food, moving towards a more balanced lifestyle physically, emotionally and spiritually by following the Islamic rulings.

On another note, vaccines developed for the Covid-19 virus must be of a Halal status. According to Usamah Ibn Syarik, the Prophet Muhammad PBUH said: “*Make use of medical treatment, for Allah SWT has not made a disease without appointing a remedy for it, with the exception of one disease, namely old age.*” (Narrated by Abu Dawud, 3855)

Thus, in spite of the various issues arising, Halal industry remains resilient in these challenging times (The Edge Market, 2020a). According to HDC (2020) and The Edge Markets (2020b), the Halal industry should take more serious measures on the implementation of hygiene and cleaning practices throughout the Halal supply chain.

The halal industry has long implemented the concept of *Halalan Tayyiban* in their business operations. This concept will ensure that all the production, packaging, logistics and distribution activities would follow the strict guidelines according to Shariah perspective. So,

the implementation of *Halalan Tayyiban* concept will ensure the industry have a safeguard and a good marketing strategy in order to increase the demand for Halal products.

In summation, people are encouraged to practice good Halal lifestyle and consume *Halalan Tayyiban* products; wholesome, good, hygiene, of quality and integrity.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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