



19 August 2018

MUIS ADVISORY ON THE DETERMINATION OF EIDUL ADHA AND DAY OF ARAFAH

1. There are times when we would find that the dates for Eidul Adha and wuquf in Arafah that have been determined locally differ from that in Saudi Arabia. Hence, when such a situation arises, should the local Muslim community perform their sunnah fasting based on the date of 9 Zulhijjah that has been determined in Singapore, or should they follow the date on which the pilgrims are performing their wuquf in Saudi Arabia?
2. In this instance, it is important to note that determining the dates of the months of hijri is a religious issue. Determining it would have to be in accordance with the sighting of the new moon at the horizon, on the 29th day of the preceding month. If the new moon is not sighted on the night of the 29th day, the preceding month will then be extended for one more day; making it 30 days in total. The following day (after the 30th day) will then be considered to be the beginning of a new month, and this is based on the religious guidance found in the hadiths and practices of the Muslim ummah.

Different Sighting Zones (Ikhtilaf Al-Mathali')

3. The issue on the different sighting zones of the new moon, has been discussed by the past scholars. Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani has recorded some of the differences in opinions with regard to this issue. The established opinion in the As-Syafie school of thought maintains that the different sighting zones will determine the beginning of a new month for the respective zones. This is also the opinion of Ikrimah, Al-Qosim bin Muhammad, Salim bin Abdillah bin Umar, Ibnu Abbas r.a, Imam Malik and Ishaq bin Rahuyah. (Fathul Bari, 4/123).

4. There are several narrations that expound on the different sighting zones in different countries. One of the narrations, as recorded by Imam Muslim, documented an incident when there was a difference in determining the beginning of Ramadan between those in Al-Sham (Damascus) and the companions in Madinah. Ibn Abbas was narrated to have said to Kuraib: 'For us here we saw it on Saturday night. So we would continue to observe fast till we complete 30 (days of fasting) or until we see (the new moon of Shawwal).' Kuraib then asked: "Is the sighting of the new moon by Mu'awiyah and his fasting not valid for you?" Ibn Abbas replied: "No, this is how the Messenger of Allah pbuh has commanded us... "
5. Al-Khatib Al-Syarbini explained in his book Mughni Al-Muhtaaj: "And when the crescent is sighted at a particular country, then it is compulsory for the neighbouring countries to follow suit, as in the case of city of Baghdad and the city of Kufa; and not for countries that are located far from each other, as in the case of Hijaz and Iraq".
6. Mathla' or the sighting zone in Singapore and the Southeast Asian region, differs from that of Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia is located further to the west of Singapore, and there is a significant timing difference between the two. Due to these reasons, the position of the new moon when it was sighted in Saudi Arabia is higher than when it was sighted in this region.
7. Hence, it becomes an individual responsibility for Muslims to follow the date that has been determined by their respective countries. If the first of Zulhijjah has been determined in Singapore, then the 9th of Zulhijjah – which is the Day of Arafah – would then have to be based on the date that has been determined earlier.
8. The Fatwa Committee was asked on the issue of the difference in determining the beginning of Zulhijjah and Eidul Adha between Singapore and Saudi Arabia. The Committee concluded that¹:

¹ First Fatwa Collection, first edition, 1987, Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, Singapore, pg 20.

- a. Hari Raya Haji ('Eiduladha) is not a social festival or anything to that effect; it is in fact a religious celebration that is closely connected to the acts of worship and prayer rituals for Muslims. All acts of worship and prayer rituals are accorded their own specific timings, and would differ based on the geographical factors and different time zones of the respective countries.
- b. We know that the world is round; when Southeast Asia is experiencing morning, the Middle East is only experiencing its night time. And in the West, there would be places that are still experiencing the evening, while other places have yet to even begin a new day. And because we are situated to the east of Makkah with a timing difference of 5 hours, based on both methods of rukyah (sighting) and hisab (calculation), the new moon will not be detected, as the geographical location of our country has yet to enter the new hijri month. Hence the rituals and acts of worship that are related to the sighting of the new moon cannot be performed as the time has not come for us to do so. However, for countries located to the west of Makkah, if it has been determined that the new moon has been sighted, then all the countries will be subjected to Makkah's decision (on the beginning of the new hijri month).
9. It is hence clear that different countries should abide by the sightings determined in their respective zones, and not to be tied to the sighting determined by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, or by the sighting of the new moon in Makkah. Regardless of the opinion that we adopt, The Office of the Mufti wishes to advise the Muslim community to refrain from criticising or belittling the differing views of others in this matter.

OFFICE OF THE MUFTI

MAJLIS UGAMA ISLAM SINGAPURA

