

MCB MUSLIM COUNCIL
OF BRITAIN

RAMADAN

2024 | 1445

Ramadan Guide 2024

رمضان كريم

Ramadan Kareem

MCB wishes everyone a rewarding Ramadan.

Ramadan 2024 is estimated to begin on the 11th or 12th of March 2024, and culminate with the first day of Eid falling on the 10th or 11th of April 2024.

Exact dates are subject to sightings of the moon.

This booklet contains guidelines, advice and signposts to resources designed to help Muslims in Britain make the most of the blessed month. It is also a handy reference point for communities, workplaces, educators and colleagues of Muslims.

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What is Ramadan?

The month of Ramadan is the holiest month of the Islamic year as it is when the Qur'an was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him).

Muslims around the world fast during daylight hours, meaning they abstain from eating, drinking or engaging in sexual relations during the duration of their fast.

Young children, the old, the sick, travellers and women who are breastfeeding or menstruating are examples of those who are exempt from fasting.

Aside from fasting, Muslims observing Ramadan also increase in spiritual devotional acts such as prayer, giving in charity and strengthening family ties.

Muslims are encouraged to share their food with friends, family and neighbours and to reach out to those who may be fasting alone, to share their Ramadan experiences.



Suhur - the meal taken just before dawn, which marks the beginning of the fast.

Iftar - the meal eaten at sunset to open the fast

Tarawih - a night prayer which is prayed every night during the month of Ramadan. The prayers are lengthier with large portions of the Qur'an recited in them aloud.

Itikaaf - An act of worship where a person will stay at a mosque for a certain number of days and nights devoting oneself to worshiping Allah, generally done during the last ten days and nights of Ramadan.



Zakat ul Fitr - a charity given by all Muslims of all ages who can afford to do so before the Eid prayer is offered.

Ramadan - this refers to the 9th month of the Islamic calendar where Muslims are expected to fast from dawn until sunset for one month if able to do so with some exceptions for those who may be ill, travelling, young, old and frail or not able to fast for other valid reasons.

Eid ul fitr - the festival for Muslims at the end of the month of Ramadan and is the first day of the following month of the Islamic calendar.

“O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you so that you may be mindful of God”

[Quran 2:183]

Why do Muslims Fast?

Fasting plays an important role in many major world religions and is a central feature in all the Abrahamic faiths, Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

In Islam, Muslims, who are able to, are required to fast during the month of Ramadan, and are recommended to fast at other times of the year too.

Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam. A key objective of fasting is to work towards an increase in taqwa (closeness to God), and to engender a sense of gratitude, self-discipline and self-improvement, at both an individual and community level, which Muslims are encouraged to continue throughout the year.

At an individual level, fasting encourages us to feel an affinity with the poor across the world who have little or no food to eat, whilst for our own bodies, scientific studies have shown that fasting provides several health benefits and forms of intermittent fasting have been incorporated into several diet regimes.

At a community level, the breaking of fast meal (iftar) at sunset encourages families and local communities to share their meal together, whilst charity work in local communities typically increases during Ramadan.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) used to strive more in worship during Ramadan than he strove in any other time of the year; and he would devote himself more (in the worship of Allah) in the last ten nights of Ramadan than he did in the earlier part of the month.

(Sahih Muslim).

Is fasting only about giving up food and drink?

In Ramadan, fasting goes beyond refraining from food and drink; it serves as a chance for Muslims to refine their character.

It highlights the importance of embodying excellent moral conduct, which entails not only performing good deeds but also avoiding wrongdoing and evil actions, as emphasised in the following narration.

The Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said, "Whoever does not give up false statements (i.e. telling lies), and evil deeds, and speaking bad words to others, Allah is not in need of his (fasting) leaving his food and drink."

(Sahih Bukhari)



Is Fasting harmful to one's health?

Fasting is generally safe for individuals without pre-existing health conditions, as long as they stay well-hydrated during non-fasting hours.

Some studies even suggest potential health benefits from fasting.

If you typically consume caffeine through tea or coffee, you may experience headaches and tiredness initially due to the lack of caffeine, but these symptoms tend to diminish as your body adapts to the absence of caffeine during the day. or more details, refer to the **'Maintaining Physical Health'** section in this Ramadan guide..



Adapting for Ramadan

If you are unable to partake of communal activities as a family, or simply dealing with time constraints & pressures, for example, consider the following:

- If long distance and unable to meet consider the use of video calling to engage with family and friends
- Ensuring proper hydration during the fasting days to prevent tiredness, headaches, and lack of focus.
- Opting for high-energy, slow-burning foods for suhoor to sustain you throughout the day.
- Maintaining energy levels throughout the workday, especially during times of heightened anxiety.
- Taking regular breaks to reflect and prioritise self-care amid the busyness of life. While striving for increased worship during Ramadan, remember it's about quality over quantity, and being good to yourself is equally important.



Maintaining Physical Health

Individuals with an illness or health condition where fasting could be detrimental to their health are exempt from fasting. Please also review the MCB's Ramadan Health Factsheet 2024 for further information.

Tips for maintaining good physical health during Ramadan:

1. **Stay Hydrated:** Drink plenty of water during non-fasting hours to ensure proper hydration. Dehydration can lead to fatigue and other health issues.
2. **Balanced Suhoor and Iftar:** Plan well-balanced meals for both suhoor (pre-dawn meal) and iftar (meal to break the fast). Include a mix of proteins, healthy fats, carbohydrates, and fruits/vegetables for sustained energy.
3. **Avoid Overeating:** While breaking your fast, resist the temptation to overeat. Opt for smaller portions and gradually consume your meal to prevent digestive discomfort.
4. **Exercise Mindfully:** Engage in light physical activity during non-fasting hours. Choose activities that are gentle on the body, such as walking or stretching, to maintain fitness without causing fatigue.
5. **Listen to Your Body:** Pay attention to your body's signals and adjust your routine accordingly. If you experience unusual fatigue or health concerns, consult with a healthcare professional..



Maintaining mental health

Mental health organisations have documented an exponential rise in demand for their services since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. This has transpired despite the general lack of conversation around mental health in British Muslim communities.

Engaging with others and meeting others may well help alleviate feelings of isolation and disconnect.

Tips for maintaining good mental health during Ramadan:

- Plan your month ahead to streamline your routine and ease into Ramadan more smoothly.
- Prioritise spending quality time with family and friends; nurturing these connections can enhance your spiritual and mental well-being, making the fasting experience more manageable. Strengthening social bonds is a crucial aspect of maintaining mental health during Ramadan.
- Explore volunteering opportunities at your local mosque, contributing to both community well-being and personal fulfillment. Engaging in community service fosters a sense of purpose and connection.
- Embrace the spirit of giving by contributing to charitable causes, fostering a positive impact on your mental well-being. Acts of charity can bring a sense of fulfillment and purpose, contributing to overall mental wellness.
- Organise your daily schedule, ensuring dedicated time for activities during Ramadan. This structured approach promotes a sense of control, reducing feelings of overwhelm. A well-organised routine fosters a balanced and less stressful Ramadan experience.
- Prioritise sufficient sleep during Ramadan, integrating restful periods into your daily plan. Quality sleep is integral to maintaining mental health; it enhances resilience and overall well-being.
- During non fasting hours incorporate exercise, such as walking or engaging in physical activity and embrace healthy eating by including more nutritional food which can all help in promoting a positive mood.





Ramadan and the Cost of Living Crisis

Although it is typical for families to stock up on products for meals during the month of fasting, we should remain conscious of the difficult circumstances some face with cost of living crisis, the strain on supply chains and the rise in living costs, be it food, fuel or energy.

Please ensure that we only purchase in reasonable quantities, which will allow everyone to acquire what they need.

Also, as per the spirit of Ramadan and the teachings of our beloved faith, do not hesitate to provide support to those within our communities struggling to observe the holy month, or indeed our neighbours within the wider community who may also be struggling.

For Muslims in the UK in need of support, Zakat given through the National Zakat Foundation may be able to help.

For more information, visit: www.nzf.org.uk

“The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Quran, a guidance for the people and clear proofs of guidance and criterion.”

[Quran 2:185]

A Day in Ramadan at a Glance

Pre-dawn Meal (Suhoor)

This is an essential meal for Muslims as this will replace breakfast during the month of Ramadan. This predawn meal should be wholesome and filling in order to sustain energy for many hours, and needs to be eaten before dawn.

'Take the Suhoor meal, for there is blessing in it.' [Bukhari & Muslim]

During the summer fasts, the days are longer, and the nights are shorter. Please advise pupils and parents to make healthy food choices and to ensure pupils are consuming more liquids than usual, avoiding caffeine and sugar drinks.

Breaking the Fast (Iftar)

This meal coincides exactly with the setting of the sun. As per tradition, Muslims break their fast with dates and water, followed by a cooked meal which should contain all the necessary nutrients for a healthy balanced diet.

Salman ibn 'Amir reported:

The Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) said, "When one of you breaks his fast, let him break it with dates for they are blessed. If they are not found, let him break it with water for it is pure."

[Sunan al-Tirmidhi 695]

Night Prayers (Tarawih)

Tarawih is a recommended voluntary act of worship, which can only take place during the month of Ramadan. This is why it is extremely popular.

Muslims can perform anything from four, eight, twelve or 20 units of prayer (rak'ats).

During this prayer portions of the Qur'an are recited out loud with the aim to complete the full recitation by the close of Ramadan known as khatam'. This prayer usually takes around 1.5/2 hours and concludes close to midnight.



Charity, Donating and Volunteering

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said:

“Charity does not decrease wealth, no one forgives another except that Allah increases his honour, and no one humbles himself for the sake of Allah except that Allah raises his status.” (Muslim)



Ramadan is also a month of giving, be that financially to charity or physically in service to others.

Whether it's to local causes such as a food bank run by your local mosque or community centre, or supporting causes alleviating poverty abroad, giving charity does not diminish our wealth, it multiples it.

Donating Safely - it is important to ensure your chosen charity is reputable and genuine. In addition, as a result of the COVID19 pandemic, online donation is all the more common. It is important to be vigilant of insecure websites, scams or spam emails seeking donations.

For those interested in donating online, see Muslim Charities Forum's **How to Give Smart and Give Safe this Ramadan' guide**.

Volunteering - There are so many ways to help the most vulnerable around us. Volunteering during Ramadan brings numerous benefits, fostering a spirit of compassion and unity. It provides a chance to actively contribute to the community, creating a positive impact on the lives of others.

Additionally, engaging in volunteer work enhances personal fulfillment and strengthens social bonds, embodying the essence of generosity and kindness.

Advice for Mosques and Prayer Facilities

Explore the possibility of offering iftar provisions for regular mosque attendees, ranging from simple water and dates to small refreshments or meals, depending on available facilities and resources.

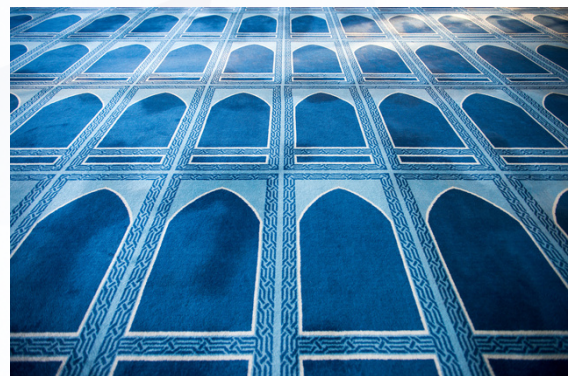
Extend iftar invitations beyond the mosque community by organising events at mosques, Islamic centres and prayer spaces.

Open mosque doors during iftar to non-Muslims, offering tours, presentations on Ramadan, and shared conversations over food whilst breaking the fast at the time of iftar.

Many Mosques across the different parts of the UK may hold specific events during Ramadan and look out for these at a mosque that is nearby to attend for this iftar.

Over the last few years more and more national organisations are holding community iftar at the time of breaking of the fast including major sports clubs and national organisations.

Consider incorporating charitable activities like food banks within mosque services during this month, further contributing to community welfare.



Sharing Ramadan in society



Use this opportunity to share your faith and your fast with your neighbours, friends and colleagues, be they Muslim or non Muslims..

This Ramadan, we should open our mosques, community centres to the community and share Ramadan with them.

We can also continue to find creative ways to share our traditions and practices with the wider community and local residents.

Here are some suggestions:

- Let people know about Ramadan by sharing this guide
- Offer to help your neighbours with any shopping they need, especially those who are elderly or infirm
- Publish Ramadan information in your neighbourhood newsletter or local newspaper
- Encourage your children to speak to their friends about Ramadan, how they celebrate the month and what it means to them
- Talk about what Ramadan means to you with colleagues and classmates while working or studying from home

Ramadan is a time of togetherness, so engaging others is also a chance to celebrate Islam, highlighting our peaceful religion and how we work together to worship Allah as one community.

Sharing Ramadan in society

In recent years, an increasing number of organisations, including Mosques, educational institutes such as schools, sports clubs, charities, and various entities, have embraced the tradition of hosting Iftar events during the holy month of Ramadan.

This practice contributes significantly to fostering strong community bonds, promoting inclusivity, and celebrating diversity.

For organisation's considering such initiatives, here are some valuable tips:

- 1. Plan a Date in advance:** Choose a suitable date within the month of Ramadan to host your Iftar event. Consider the significance of the occasion and the convenience of attendees.
- 2. Extend Invitations:** Extend invitations to both local Muslim and non-Muslim communities to attend and collectively break their fast for those who are fasting. This inclusive approach enriches the experience for everyone involved.
- 3. Structured Event Schedule:** Develop a well-organised schedule for the event. Incorporate speakers from your organisation and the local Muslim community to share insights about Ramadan and the importance of fostering positive relationships. This can enhance understanding and appreciation among participants.
- 4. Break your fast Together:** Provide a delicious meal at the time of Iftar for all attendees. Sharing a meal during this blessed time creates a sense of unity and reinforces the spirit of community.
- 5. Community Building:** Use the occasion to build lasting relationships within the community. Consider making this event an annual tradition, reinforcing connections and strengthening the fabric of your organisation's ties with the community.

This list is not exhaustive. By following these tips, organisations can contribute to building a more interconnected and harmonious society, embodying the spirit of Ramadan and its emphasis on communal unity.

Eco-conscious Ramadan

Ramadan's essence extends beyond abstaining from food and drink; in our pursuit of greater taqwa, we should aim to reduce, not increase, our consumption and uphold the sanctity of our beautiful planet.

As the heart of local British Muslim communities, mosques play a crucial role during Ramadan. With communal iftars and taraweeh prayers taking place across mosques, they can become champions of eco-conscious practices throughout this holy month.

Explore eco-friendly initiatives with the Muslim Council of Britain's '6-Step Guide to Eco-Friendly Mosques.' Additionally, MCB offers guides on creating environmentally conscious Eid and Ramadan.

This year, we encourage mosques across the UK to make at least one permanent eco-change during Ramadan, contributing to environmental preservation and embracing a greener ethos.

Download the guide at www.mcb.org.uk/resources/greener-ramadan-mosque-guide

Take part in this campaign this year and become a greener and eco friendly mosque.

For details to our resources on greener Ramadan click on the following link: www.mcb.org.uk/resources



Advice for Employers

What to be aware of:

Some employees will be abstaining from food, and drink from dawn to sunset, throughout the month of Ramadan, from 11th March (+/- 1 day), to 10th April (exact dates subject to sighting of the moon).

Muslims observing Ramadan will be fasting during daylight hours, eating one meal just before dawn (suhoor) and one meal at sunset (iftar).

Muslims can eat or drink as they please during the non fasting hours between sunset and dawn as needed.

Fasts will get longer as the month progresses and days get longer; lasting up to 15 hours as we approach the month of April. Depending on the weather and the length of the fast, some people who fast during Ramadan may experience mild dehydration, which can cause headaches, tiredness and a lack of concentration. For those who usually drink caffeine through tea or coffee, the lack of caffeine can bring on headaches and tiredness.

However, this will reduce as the body adapts to going without caffeine during the day.

Due to the timings of meals before dawn and after sunset, adjustment to new sleeping and eating patterns may also lead to some people feeling more tired than normal.

Don't assume that all employees want to be treated differently because they are fasting, but be open to having a discussion with your employees.

Advice for Line Managers

- Be aware and open to discussing Ramadan and what support or adjustments your employee would like. Managers may experience requests for annual leave for those observing - be prepared for people to request to take holidays towards the end of Ramadan to celebrate Eid (holiday marking the end of Ramadan).
- Be accommodating annual leave requests particularly as the majority of Christian holidays are national holidays. The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced a useful decision-making tool to help employers deal with requests for time off for religious reasons.
- Consider allowing for flexible working and adjusting working hours (i.e. an early start, working through lunch and an early finish) during this period, if requested and able to do.
- Consider allowing muslim employees to have breaks for afternoon prayers (Dhuhr and Asr) if requested as this may involve changing usual break and lunch time break to accommodate for this - this is especially important for Muslims observing Ramadan to be able to pray their daily prayers on time.
- If not already available in your workplace, we encourage a multi faith prayer space or quiet space be considered for those working on-site and wishing to do their daily prayers.



Simple tips for employers and line managers to consider for Muslim staff during the month of Ramadan

Understanding about Ramadan

- If you will be supervising staff who will be fasting during Ramadan then a basic understanding of Ramadan and fasting in this month can help identify how you may be able to support staff.

Understanding terminology used during Ramadan

- Some of these terms, include Ramadan Mubarak which means Blessed Ramadan. Ramadan Kareem which means Generous Ramadan. Eid Mubarak which means Blessed Eid. Offering Muslim staff one of the above Ramadan greetings can be a nice gesture.

Flexibility

- Please consider offering work flexibility and inclusivity for those observing fasting during Ramadan. Some individuals may need specific adjustments. It's advisable to engage in proactive conversations with employees in advance to enquire about any support they may require. Evaluate meeting schedules and discuss with employees if adjustments, including potential changes to work roles, are necessary at any stage.

Speaking about Ramadan

- Some Muslims may not fast and some may not require any help and this would be something to consider too. It is important to not assume all Muslims will fast as some may not do so for a variety of reasons.

...and not forgetting Palestine



Recognising the challenging times due to the conflict in Gaza, it's crucial to extend support to employees and staff.

Providing pastoral care and a supportive environment is essential for those who may be distressed by the events in Palestine including in Gaza and the West Bank.

This advice aims to encourage empathy and understanding in workplaces and communities, creating a collective effort to stand in solidarity during these difficult times.

Advice for teaching staff at educational institutes

To foster inclusivity for Muslim students in schools nationwide, here are some key considerations for educational institutions to enhance the Ramadan experience.

- 1. Guest speakers:** Invite local mosque speakers to educate students about Ramadan. prioritise a session with teaching staff before Ramadan begins to ensure everyone is well-informed about the basics of this holy month, fostering understanding and inclusivity.
- 2. Educational Displays:** Organise displays on Ramadan with interactive activities for students.
- 3. Parental Involvement:** Foster inclusivity by celebrating Ramadan with parents and establishing a good working relationship with parents with regular engagement. Consider an Iftar event if able to host.
- 4. Prayer Provision:** Consider facilitating a designated space for students to pray during lunch, aligning with the school day's solitary prayer time. Consider a reflective space in schools. Use MCB guide to help with this:
<https://mcb.org.uk/resources/reflection-spaces-prayer-room-guidelines/>
- 5. Lunchtime Activities:** Introduce activities during lunch, including colouring for younger students and general engagement for those observing fasting if required..
- 6. Understanding Timings:** Acknowledge diverse Ramadan and Eid timings within local communities, fostering a non-judgmental approach as some may start and end Ramadan on different days.
- 7. Embrace Eid Celebrations:** Explore the possibility of organising festive Eid parties post-Ramadan, fostering a positive environment for Muslim students. Additionally, contemplate authorising a day off on Eid to accommodate those students celebrating.
- 8. Support for Fasting Students:** Consider offering packed meals for students on free school meals who are fasting to take home at the end of school day.
- 9. Communication with Parents:** Strengthen connections by sending letters during Ramadan and Eid, engaging with parents, and ensuring communication for younger students intending to fast, including completion of consent forms if planning to fast and emergency advice for this month.

“Indeed, We sent the Qur’an down during the Night of Decree. And what can make you know what is the Night of Decree? The Night of Decree is better than a thousand months.

The angels and the Spirit descend therein by permission of their Lord for every matter. Peace it is until the emergence of dawn.”

[Quran 97:1-5]

Eid Ul Fitr

Eid ul Fitr is the festival after the month of Ramadan when this blessed month comes to an end. It is a religious holiday for Muslims that takes place during the first three days of the tenth month of the Islamic calendar in the month called **Shawwal**. It is one of two festivals Muslims celebrate in the year.

It allows families and friends to come together and take part in this celebration. The exact date of Eid Ul Fitr can vary and depends on the sighting of the moon.

What happens on the first day of Eid ul Fitr

Muslims will generally visit the Mosque for Eid prayers in the morning on the first day of Eid. They will offer prayers and express gratitude to Allah whilst reflecting on the blessings of this month of Ramadan.

They will ensure they have paid a small charity before offering Eid prayers to support those in need which is called Zakatul fitr.

Fasting is prohibited during the day of Eid ul fitr.

Following the Eid prayers Muslims will traditionally meet one another offering the greeting of Eid Mubarak, which means Blessed Festival. During the Eid celebrations people will wear new clothes and visit family and friends and exchange gifts.



Simple tips for employers and line managers to consider for Muslim staff at the time of Eid Ul Fitr

Understanding about Eid Ul Fitr

Understand the festival of Eid Ul Fitr and its relationship to Ramadan. This is a celebration usually celebrated the day after the month of Ramadan ends. It depends on the sighting of the moon.

Taking time off on the day of Eid

Sometimes Eid may take place on different days for different Muslim communities and it may mean some Muslims take off one day and some another day. It would be important to consider this can happen and display some flexibility if staff request a day off work as part of their leave entitlement.

Planning Eid day work schedule

If possible it would be worth not holding or scheduling meetings on the day of Eid ul Fitr which may involve attendance by Muslim employees where this is possible to allow them to celebrate Eid ul fitr.

Eid greetings

Sometimes a simple offering of Eid Mubarak which is a greeting on the day of Eid is a nice gesture if offered to Muslims celebrating Eid.

Speaking about Eid

Some Muslims may not take time off Eid for one reason or the other and it would be worth bearing this in mind when discussing or considering a day off for Eid for Muslim staff.

Planning ahead for Ramadan & Eid



Ramadan is an annual month-long observance lasting 29 to 30 days, with Eid ul Fitr typically falling 30-31 days after Ramadan begins. Schools, particularly those in areas with a significant Muslim population, may find it beneficial to schedule holidays around Eid if it coincides with other national holidays allowing for better planning when aware of potential dates in advance. This could also help employers allowing staff to plan annual leave during this period.

Ramadan start date for the next 10 years**

11th March 2024

1st March 2025

18th February 2026

8th February 2027

28th January 2028

16th January 2029

6th January 2030

26th December 2030

15th December 2031

4th December 2032

23rd November 2033

Eid ul Fitr date for the next 10 years**

10th April 2024

31st March 2025

20th March 2026

10th March 2027

27th February 2028

15th February 2029

5th February 2030

25th January 2031

14th January 2032

3rd January 2033

23rd December 2033

** subject to moonsighting

About the MCB

Founded in 1997, the Muslim Council of Britain is the UK's largest and most diverse Muslim umbrella body with over 500 members including mosques, charities, and professional networks.

We are an independent, democratic and cross-sectarian organisation, with core funding from membership fees and donations from Muslim communities.

Our Mission: Empowering Muslim communities towards achieving a just, cohesive and successful British society.

Help expand our work by becoming a friend of MCB at:
www.mcb.org.uk/friends

About this guide

This guidance was developed by the Muslim Council of Britain - information is accurate as of March 2024.

Feedback is welcome, please email:
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Keep up to date with the work of the MCB by joining the mailing list, visit: mcb.org.uk/get-involved

Sharing in the rewards of Ramadan.

In Ramadan, the rewards for good deeds are multiplied many times compared to other times.

Here are some tips for those fasting during this blessed month:



Host an Iftar



Share Iftar with your neighbours



Be more eco conscious and cut waste



Educate friends and colleagues on Ramadan



Reach out to those alone and vulnerable



Share our Ramadan guide



Make a donation to the MCB

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