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Shabaan / Ramadan - 1445 H

Prof Shafey Kidwai to head the Sir Syed Academy



ALIGARH: Professor Shafey Kidwai, a renowned scholar and recipient of the Sahitya Akademi award, has been appointed as the new Director of the Sir Syed Academy at Aligarh Muslim University. His tenure will last for three years or until further orders. Professor Kidwai is well-known for his extensive research on Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, which includes his best selling book titled "Sir Syed Ahmad Khan: Reason, Religion and Nation," published by Routledge in 2020. This work has earned him recognition as a distinguished Sir Syed scholar. Additionally, Professor Kidwai is a respected communication expert, bilingual critic, translator, and columnist. He has received numerous

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ABU DHABI: The recent inauguration of the BAPS temple in Abu Dhabi by Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlights an interesting irony. This grand temple stands in the Muslim-majority UAE, where secularization is on the rise. This event comes shortly after the inauguration of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir in India.

While Modi's government in India blurs the lines between the state and Hindu faith and undermines minority rights, the UAE moves in the opposite direction. The UAE's secularization, influencing Saudi Arabia as well, is a significant development in the Islamic world. This shift challenges India's

The Tale of Two Temples: Contrasting Realities in UAE and India



Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu Mandir, in Abu Dhabi, UAE, on February 14, 2024. | Photo Credit: PTI

secular values.

The UAE has attracted people of various religions and backgrounds to live and work

there. Despite Islam being the official religion, the government allows diverse religious practices. Non-Muslims, forming a quarter

of the population, have space to worship freely, with many churches, a synagogue, and a gurdwara present. Hindu gatherings and celebrations are also welcomed.

The UAE's tolerance extends beyond religion. Alcohol and pork are available, and Ramadan fasting rules are relaxed. Women have freedom in dress, and discrimination based on religion is rare. These progressive attitudes influence neighboring Saudi Arabia, where Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) is spearheading modernization efforts by reducing Islamic influence and cutting support for

» Page 5

Staff Writer

BENGALURU: on february 16, karnataka chief minister siddaramaiah presented the state budget for the fiscal year 2024-25, highlighting initiatives aimed at minority development and promoting the use of the Kannada language in commercial establishments. With a total outlay of ₹3,71,383 crore, the budget includes significant allocations for various sectors, including minority empowerment and educational

Karnataka Unveils State Budget:

Focus on Minority Development and Kannada



CM Siddaramaiah presenting the state budget in the assembly. (Express Photo by Jithendra M)

initiatives.

In a bid to support minority communities, the budget earmarks funds for educational opportunities, including the establishment of Morarji Desai residential schools, post-matric hostels, Maulana Azad schools, and pre-university education institutions. Additionally, the fee reimbursement program for minority students pursuing higher

education will be reinstated.

Economic assistance measures include providing loans of up to Rs. 10 crore to minority entrepreneurs for establishing or upgrading micro and small industries, along with an interest subsidy of 6%. The Karnataka Minorities Development Corporation will offer loans and training to silk reeler communities from minority communities.

The budget emphasizes the development of Wakf properties,

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Spl Correspondent

New Delhi: In the wake of bulldozing the ancient Akhundji Mosque, an orphanage, and a graveyard in Mehrauli by the Delhi Development Authority, a civil society group, 'Sheher' strongly condemned the DDA action. Addressing a protest meeting against demolitions in Mehrauli, at the Press Club of India, civil society members said the authorities carried out demolition without any prior communication with the caretakers of these sites. They also strongly debunked the government's claim that these sites were encroached upon on public land, saying it was absolutely false. They strongly called for a halt to the destruction of Delhi's historical and lived heritage.

Speakers underlined that the Akhundji mosque's structural form dates it to the Tughlaq period, and its chronogram mentions it was repaired by Bahadur Shah Zafar in 1853-54. The graveyard dates back 500 years and is still used by the

community in Mehrauli. Far from being encroachments, these structures predate the modern city and the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) and continue to be part of the lived heritage of the city. These are places of belonging to the city across time for different communities.

"Such attacks on mosques and shrines in Delhi constitute an unconscionable assault on our lived heritage, which is shared across faiths. We condemn these attempts to erase memory and places of habitation," they added. They also pointed out that the recent destruction is part of a pattern of demolitions undertaken by authorities in the city over the past year. The wanton destruction of homes, bastis, religious structures, shops, and markets amounts to a violation of people's rights to life, employment, and safe housing.

Since the Akhundji Mosque's building date is unknown, its

exact age is still unknown. But historical narratives offer some perspective. The mosque was repaired in 1270 AH (1853-4 AD), according to a 1922 publication by the Archaeological Survey of India. It was located west of an older Idgah that was built in 1398 AD during Taimur's invasion of India.

Maulvi Zafar Hasan's 'Catalogue of Muhammadan and Hindu Monuments, Volume III' mentions that the Akhundji Mosque, about a hundred yards west of the Idgah, had an arched roof supported by two pillars made of stone from the area. Historian Rana Safvi said that, given the use of Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar's takhallus, the inscription detailing renovations in 1270 AH (1853-54) may be linked to him, despite contradicting histories.

The DDA, which comes under the union government, claims it was an encroachment in a reserved forest area. Historians say that the

mosque predates the notification of the area as a reserved forest in 1994.

The encroachment claim is refuted by author Sohail Hashmi, who claims that the mosque was already there before Sanjay Van Van Bhoomi was established in 1994. The Delhi High Court has issued a notice to the DDA in response to a petition filed by the Waqf Board Management Committee, questioning the basis for the mosque's demolition.

Heritage and history enthusiasts have criticized the DDA's demolitions, believing that Mehrauli, Delhi's oldest city, has lost most of its cultural legacy. Media attention to the demolitions has focused on the 700-year-old Akhundji Mosque and the nearby graveyard. Concerns over the presence of the CRPF and significant police presence near the burial place, where they have been performing final rites for generations, have been voiced by

the caretakers, Maulanas, and residents.

They said as concerned citizens, "We strongly condemn this practice of 'demolition raj' that has taken on new and violent forms across the country. We are deeply saddened and concerned by the recent demolitions in Haldwani and the heartbreaking consequences that have followed." "We demand a stop to all demolitions and demand guarantees from the concerned government bodies that the cultural and built memory of the city will be preserved. We demand that the voices of invested local communities be heard.

We stand against this authoritarian mode of urban governance. It hinders the possibilities of building and sustaining democratic and inclusive urban cultures," they said.

The meeting was addressed by Advocate Anas Tanweer Farooqi, historian and civil rights activist Uma Chakravarti; Anil Bakshi, head of the street vendors group; and Nilesh Kumar, member member Delhi Housing Right Task Force. ■

Bulldozing of Akhundji Mosque and graveyard

Civil society calls for a halt to the destruction of Delhi's historical and lived heritage

JIH Workshop Addresses Critical Issues Surrounding Waqf Properties

BENGALURU: Jamaat-e-Islami Hind (JIH) organized a three-day workshop on waqf, bringing together specialists, officials, activists, and representatives from across the country to discuss critical issues and challenges in safeguarding waqf properties.

During the workshop, JIH President Syed Sadatullah Husaini expressed concern about the increasing risks to waqf properties, including political meddling, land grabs, and corruption. He highlighted the emergence of "pro-communal political forces" seeking to destroy old mosques and repeal the Waqf Act. Husaini urged



people and organizations to raise awareness about the importance of waqf properties, support organizations working to protect them, and take legal action against intruders.

Dr. Saad Belgami, President of JIH Karnataka, delivered a keynote speech criticizing the community's lack of sincerity in

managing and safeguarding religious endowments. Former Karnataka State Waqf Board CEO Mujeebullah Zafari discussed the current state of awqaf nationwide, while current CEO Jilani Mokashi outlined the state government's initiatives to inventory and digitize waqf properties.

The workshop also featured lectures by waqf specialist Afzalulhaq on relevant laws and acts, along with contributions from other JIH office bearers.

Together, participants formulated strategies for protecting and developing waqf properties amidst ongoing challenges. ■

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Civil Society Group Condemns Demolition of Historic Sites in Mehrauli



NEW DELHI: In response to the demolition of the ancient Akhundji Mosque, an orphanage, and a graveyard in Mehrauli by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), civil society group 'Sheher' has strongly condemned the action. During a protest meeting at the Press Club of India, members of the group criticized the authorities for carrying out demolitions without prior communication with the caretakers of these sites.

They refuted the government's claim that these sites were encroachments on public land, asserting that the structures, including the mosque and graveyard, predate the modern city and continue to be part of the

lived heritage of Delhi. Speakers emphasized that these sites hold significant historical and cultural value, representing places of belonging for different communities across time.

The recent destruction in Mehrauli is seen as part of a pattern of demolitions undertaken by authorities in the city over the past year. Members of the civil society group highlighted that such actions violate people's rights to life, employment, and safe housing.

Historical narratives provide perspective on the age and significance of the Akhundji Mosque, which was repaired in 1853-54. The DDA claims the demolition was due to

encroachment in a reserved forest area, but historians refute this, stating that the mosque predates the notification of the area as a reserved forest in 1994.

Concerned citizens demand a halt to all demolitions and call for guarantees from government bodies to preserve the cultural and built heritage of the city. They emphasize the importance of listening to the voices of local communities and standing against authoritarian modes of urban governance.

The meeting was addressed by various speakers, including Advocate Anas Tanweer Farooqi, historian Uma Chakravarti, and members of civil rights and housing rights group ■

Key Event on the Role of Ulama in Shaping Islamic Society

NEW DELHI:

The Community Education Center recently hosted a significant event on February 18,



Ulama in the Construction of Islamic Society." Surah Asr was recited by Maulana Muhammad Shahabuddin, emphasizing

focus on the pivotal role of Ulama in shaping Islamic society. Presided over by Mufti Sohail Ahmad Qasmi, President of Majlis Ulama Delhi, the event saw active participation from Ulama and Imams representing various mosques.

The proceedings began with Maulana Muhammad Khurshid Qasmi reciting the Holy Quran. Mufti Sohail Ahmad Qasmi emphasized the leadership role of Ulama in societal reform efforts, urging unity and the avoidance of unnecessary rituals while preserving sect identities.

Mufti Muhammad Ahmadullah Qasmi, Assistant President of Majlis Ulama Delhi, underscored the importance of mutual respect and solidarity among scholars, regardless of religious differences. He emphasized the need for systematic task execution and building friendly relationships with the community. Various Ulama and Imams shared their insights on the "Role of

scholars' role in societal advancement.

Maulana Muhammad Rashid Qasmi from Jamia Al-Abrar al-Islamia highlighted the significance of scholars' morality, faith, and character in societal progress. Maulana Muhammad Tariq Nadvi cautioned against dividing sciences in the name of religion and worldly affairs, while Maulana Mutahhar Hayat Nadvi stressed the importance of aligning actions with Islamic principles.

Dr. Anees Ahmed Falahi called for scholars to base their teachings on the Quran and Sunnah, fostering Islamic brotherhood and actively promoting it. The event concluded with gratitude expressed by Maulana Muhammad Salim, Secretary of Majlis Ulama, Kanchan Kunj, and Qari Abdul Manan, Assistant President of Majlis Ulama Delhi.

Thirty Ulama and Imams participated in the event, skillfully moderated by Dr. Anees Ahmed Falahi. ■

Empowering Muslim Representation: 50 Ulama Enrolled as Advocates in Kerala High Court



CALICUT: In the current landscape of the nation, there is a pressing need for increased Muslim representation across all sectors to counter the influence of sectarian powers. Addressing this necessity, a significant milestone was achieved as 212 doctors and 50 lawyers graduated together in a Unani graduation ceremony held in Calicut on the 20th February 2024.

This remarkable feat was accomplished by the Unani Medical College and Law College, the first institution of its kind in Kerala's Knowledge City,

under the leadership of Sheikh Abu Bakr Ahmed. Recognizing the importance of effective representation of Muslims in the judiciary, Sheikh Abu Bakr Ahmed has taken the initiative to ensure reasoned advocacy on matters concerning Sharia law.

The graduation ceremony marked a turning point in modern education, as Alam, Fazil, and Mufti graduates were transformed into 50 Ulama experts in the field of law, ready to serve in the Kerala High Court. Their enrollment as advocates in the High Court signifies a

significant step towards enhancing Muslim participation in legal proceedings and addressing issues pertinent to Islam and Sharia.

The ceremony, held at the Center Knowledge City, was inaugurated by Kerala Education Minister Dr. R. Bindu, who commended the institutions responsible for producing such accomplished individuals. This initiative not only celebrates academic success but also paves the way for greater diversity and representation in the legal arena, fostering a more inclusive and equitable society. ■

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Karnataka Unveils State Budget: Focus on Minority Development and Kannada

allocating Rs. 100 crore for their preservation and enhancement. Furthermore, programs for self-employment among women's self-help groups within minority populations will be promoted, with a budget allocation of Rs. 10 crore. Other provisions include funding for the State Minorities Commission, workshops for registered Moulavis and

Muttawallis, honorariums for Imams and Muvazzins, and improvements to pilgrimage sites across the state. Additionally, Rs. 10 crore has been allocated for the construction of the Mangaluru Haj Bhavan.

Moreover, the budget mandates that 60% of all offices, stores, and commercial establishments use the Kannada language,

highlighting the government's commitment to preserving and promoting the state's cultural heritage.

Overall, the Karnataka state budget for 2024-25 underscores the government's efforts to foster minority development, promote linguistic diversity, and support various sectors crucial for the state's progress and prosperity. ■

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Amnesty International has issued a fervent plea to Indian authorities, demanding an immediate cessation of the "unlawful" demolition of Muslim properties across several states. The rights group's call comes as it released two new reports documenting the targeting of homes, businesses, and places of worship belonging to the Muslim minority.

Describing these demolitions as a form of extrajudicial punishment, Amnesty International has emphasized the urgent need for adequate compensation to all affected individuals. The reports highlight the significant impact of these demolitions, which have left hundreds of people, primarily Muslims, homeless and their livelihoods destroyed. The London-based organization particularly called out the use of JCB construction equipment, widely employed in these demolitions, urging the company to condemn its machinery's involvement in human rights violations publicly.

Key points from the reports include:

- Between April and June 2022, at

Amnesty Urges India to Halt Bulldozing of Muslim Properties



(Photo:newslandry.com)

least 128 properties were demolished using bulldozers, rendering at least 617 individuals homeless or affecting their livelihoods.

- Demolitions were carried out as a form of punishment by authorities in five states Assam, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi following episodes of religious violence or Muslim protests against discriminatory government policies.

- Bulldozers have become symbolic of the oppression of Muslims in India, particularly

under the policy initiated by Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, known for his anti-Muslim stance.

- Legal experts and rights groups argue that these demolitions lack due process and disproportionately target Muslim communities.

- JCB bulldozers, manufactured by a UK-based company, are frequently used in these demolitions, prompting Amnesty to call for the company's accountability in addressing human rights abuses.

Amnesty's report underscores the

need for India to uphold its obligations under international human rights law, including the right to adequate housing and social security. The organization reiterates that JCB, as a business entity, must take responsibility for the use of its machinery in human rights violations.

In response, a legal firm representing JCB attempted to distance the company from these violations, emphasizing the lack of direct control over the use of its products once sold.

This latest call from Amnesty adds to previous concerns raised over JCB's alleged complicity in human rights violations, including its involvement in demolitions in Palestine. The company has consistently denied selling machinery directly to governments or contractors involved in such actions.

Amnesty's advocacy underscores the ongoing challenges faced by Muslim minorities in India and the critical need for accountability and respect for human rights in government and corporate practices. ■

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The Tale of Two Temples: Contrasting Realities in UAE and India

radical groups worldwide.

This trend towards secularization in the UAE and potentially Saudi Arabia marks a significant shift in the Islamic world. For India, reduced Saudi funding for conservative mosques could lead to a return to moderate religious guidance for Indian Muslims.

The UAE's example challenges the Hindu nationalist dream of a Hindu majoritarian state, often compared

to Saudi Arabia's treatment of non-Muslims. Modi, at the temple inauguration, praised the UAE's diversity, contrasting India's fading secularism.

As Hindu residents in UAE face this contrast, it prompts reflection on India's trajectory. The writer, a private equity investor, emphasizes the importance of embracing diversity and secular values in both countries. ■

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Controversy Surrounds Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code: Targeting Muslim Identity



(PTI Photo)

NEW DELHI: In passing the Uniform Civil Code Bill, the BJP-ruled state of Uttarakhand became the first in the country to indiscreetly target Muslim identity since the so-called UCC legislation exempts scheduled tribe groups from its provisions. The bill passed amidst the campaign for ethnic cleansing, which has gathered ominous momentum since Muslims constitute around 14% of the state's population. The fascist Hindutva forces want to throw out all Muslims from the state, which is tacitly supported by the state government. And the UCC seems to be part of that agenda, which has been the favorite pastime of the ruling BJP for decades.

However, the hill state's elected political leadership is mostly to blame for the heightened anti-Muslim sentiments in the region and passing the UCC. Of his 45 years of age, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama has dedicatedly worked for the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh for 33 of those years. He was a political lightweight in 2021, having been appointed chief minister out of the blue. Even after losing his assembly seat in the state elections of 2022, he was re-elected as chief minister, demonstrating the Sangh's continued prominence.

Later, he was chosen to fill the seat left empty by a politician from the BJP. He consistently pushes all the buttons that create the poisonous stereotype of the Muslim in Uttarakhand as an enemy, a jihadi, and an outsider. Political observers see the enactment of the UCC by the

Dhama government in this context. It is to be noted that after much ado about the UCC, the union government, led by the BJP, put this issue on the back burner. Naturally, Muslim organizations took exception to the Uttarakhand government's action, calling it disrespectful to the country's motto of unity in diversity.

The All India Muslim Personal Law Board, a representative body of schools of thought, said the UCC Bill passed in the Uttarakhand Assembly was inappropriate, unnecessary, and against the diversity that has been rushed to gain political advantage. It is a mere eyewash and nothing more than political propaganda.

Speaking with Islamic Voice, Board spokesperson Dr. S. Q. R. Ilyas said it is not UCC but to target only Muslim identity. He questioned why the act exempted tribal groups from its ambit.

According to him, "this legislation, in a hurried manner, deals only with three aspects: firstly, the sphere of marriage and divorce in a cursory manner; thereafter, it deals with succession, albeit in extenso; and lastly, strangely, it conceives a

new legal regime for live-in relationships, which undoubtedly will impinge on the moral values of all the religions. While Scheduled Tribes are already excluded from this law, for all other communities, provisions are included to provide for their customs and usages."

For example, while the law provides degrees of prohibited relationships in which marriages cannot be solemnized, it also provides that such a rule is not applicable if the customs and usages of the parties permit

otherwise. The question that begs for an answer is, Where is the uniformity then?

One controversial issue brought up by Dr. Ilyas is the equalization of inheritance rights between the sexes, which goes against the norms of Islamic law as defined by the holy Quran.

He underlined that Islamic law requires fair allocation according to family members' financial responsibilities, with women receiving different portions according to their responsibilities.

Banning second marriages in the proposed law is also only for publicity purposes. Because the data provided by the government itself shows that its ratio is also falling rapidly. A second marriage is not done for fun but because of social necessity.

The Scheduled Tribes have already been excluded from the Act; all other caste communities have been exempted from their customs. For example, when this proposed law provides a list of prohibited relationships in which marriages cannot be performed,

it also provides the facility that if the customs of the parties allow otherwise, this rule will not apply. When a problem calls for an answer, then where is the uniformity?

He also underlined that issues such as marriage, divorce, succession, etc. are included in the concurrent list of the Constitution. As per Article 245 of the Constitution, it is the Parliament that has the law-making power on these subjects. Only Parliament has exclusive power to make such legislation. The state's power is subject to the exclusive power of the parliament.

As per the Muslim Personal Laws (Shariat) Application Act, 1937, in any proceedings relating to marriage, divorce, or succession, Muslims shall be governed by the same. Section 3 of the said Act provides a mechanism as well.

Therefore, all that this law is doing is giving rise to multiple proceedings, which will further choke the dockets of our overburdened courts, he added. While the bill seeks to give itself an overriding effect by envisaging

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The recent demolition of the ancient Akhonji Masjid in South Delhi's Mehrauli locality and other religious sites by the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) has ignited discussions on the fate of historic landmarks and cultural treasures across the city, prompting scrutiny of their status as Waqf lands. This raises pertinent questions about the role and significance of Waqf in India, both historically and in contemporary times.

Waqf, stemming from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), involves the altruistic act of dedicating property for charitable or religious purposes, with its benefits directed towards the community. Its roots in India run deep, particularly flourishing during Muslim rule under leaders like Firoz Shah Tughlaq and Sher Shah Suri, who established hospitals, educational institutions, and rest houses supported by Waqf initiatives.

Emperor Jalaluddin Akbar further bolstered the Waqf system, erecting opulent structures on Waqf lands and enhancing its assets. Despite the challenges posed by the

Unveiling the Legacy and Present-Day Dynamics of Waqf in India



Centuries-Old Akhunji Masjid in Delhi demolished
Photo: (Source: X/@zeyadkhan)

British colonial era, Muslims persisted in dedicating their lands to Waqf, contributing to India's independence movement and societal welfare. Notably, Mahatma Gandhi's non-cooperation movement witnessed the establishment of numerous educational institutions on Waqf lands.

The legal framework governing Waqf in India dates back to the early 19th century, with laws

enacted to regulate the management of Waqf properties. However, the British Raj saw the erosion of Waqf assets through legislation and policies. This led to agitation for improved Waqf laws, culminating in the enactment of the 'Muslim Waqf Validating Act 1913,' ensuring legal recognition and protection of Waqf properties.

Today, India boasts 32 state-level Waqf boards and a Central Waqf

Council tasked with safeguarding Waqf properties nationwide. Distinctions between Sunni and Shia Waqf boards are delineated in the Waqf Act, with separate entities established based on specific criteria.

The constitutional validity of the Waqf Act is presently under scrutiny in the Supreme Court, with arguments emphasizing its pivotal role in safeguarding Waqf properties from encroachment.

The Waqf Act serves as a crucial regulatory mechanism aimed at preserving these properties for the collective benefit of society.

As deliberations continue regarding the future of Waqf properties, it is imperative to acknowledge their historical legacy and contemporary relevance in India's cultural and societal fabric. Waqf remains an indispensable institution, contributing to the welfare and advancement of communities across the nation. ■

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Implications of AMU's Minority Character Under Judicial Scrutiny

Syed Ali Mujtaba

The impending Supreme Court verdict on the minority status of Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) has stirred considerable apprehension among the Muslim community in India. Amidst speculations of the judgment favoring the dilution of its minority character, concerns are mounting over the potential repercussions on Muslim education in the country.

A Brief Overview of the Case:

Established in the late 19th century under British colonial rule, AMU evolved from a school to a university, with a distinct emphasis on providing both modern and religious education to Muslims. Its minority character was affirmed through a series of historical developments, culminating in parliamentary legislation in 1981.

However, subsequent legal challenges and governmental interventions have cast shadows over AMU's minority status. The current legal battle traces back to a case filed in 1967, which resulted in the Supreme Court ruling against the minority character of



the institution. Despite parliamentary efforts to restore its status, ongoing legal debates persist.

The Present Legal Landscape:

In the latest court proceedings, advocates representing AMU have vehemently defended its minority character, citing constitutional provisions under Article 30(1) that empower minority communities to administer educational institutions for their upliftment. Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing AMU, underscored the institution's pivotal role in providing opportunities for Muslim students in higher education.

On the contrary, counter arguments contend that a nationally funded institution cannot maintain a minority character, irrespective of constitutional guarantees. The

debate hinges on the broader implications for educational access and community upliftment.

The Stakes for Muslim Education:

AMU's legacy transcends its role as a mere academic institution. It symbolizes the aspirations of the Aligarh Movement, which advocated for modern scientific education among Muslims during India's colonial era. Any dilution of its minority status would not only curtail educational opportunities for Muslims but also signify a setback for the community's socio-economic advancement.

Final Thoughts:

The impending Supreme Court judgment on AMU's minority character carries profound implications for the future of Muslim education in India. Beyond legal debates, it is a matter of safeguarding the educational rights and aspirations of a marginalized community. As the nation awaits the court's decision, the outcome will undoubtedly reverberate across the socio-political landscape, shaping the trajectory of minority rights and educational equity in India.

«Page 1

Prof Shafey Kidwai to head the Sir Syed Academy

accolades for his literary achievements, including awards from the Sahitya Akademi, Uttar Pradesh Urdu Academy, and the Madhya Pradesh Government. He has authored several books in both English and Urdu, covering topics such as Urdu literature, journalism, and cultural studies. Professor Kidwai's contributions extend beyond academia, as his writings are regularly featured in prominent newspapers and journals. He has also served in various capacities within literary organizations and academic institutions. With over three decades of teaching experience, Professor Kidwai is a seasoned educator in fields such as film studies, cultural studies, and broadcast journalism.

Assam Government Repeals Assam Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act



Image Courtesy: indtoday.com

GUWAHATI: Following the recent enactment of a uniform civil code (UCC) legislation in Uttarakhand, the BJP-led government in Assam repealed the long-standing Assam Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act of 1935. The decision was made during a state cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on February 23.

Cabinet Minister Jayanta Mallabarua described the move as a significant step toward implementing a Uniform Civil Code. Under the new structure, all matters related to Muslim marriages and divorces will be governed by the Special Marriages Act, with the District Commissioner and the District Registrar responsible for registering such events. The 94 Muslim registrars previously employed under the revoked Act will be released from their positions and offered a lump sum payment of Rs 2 lakh.

Mallabarua highlighted the decision's broader implications, particularly in addressing issues such as child marriage. By repealing the Act, the administration aims to combat child marriage, defined as unions

involving individuals under the ages of 18 for women and 21 for men.

In response to the decision, AIUDF president and MP Badruddin Ajmal criticized the move, stating that it would provoke Muslims and polarize voters in favor of the BJP government. Ajmal announced opposition to the repeal of the Act, promising to take action after the elections. He also urged Muslim Marriage Registrars not to accept compensation from the government, emphasizing that they are not beggars.

The decision to repeal the Assam Muslim Marriage and Divorce Registration Act reflects the government's commitment to implementing a uniform civil code and addressing social issues such as child marriage in the state.

I once had a thousand desires, but in my one desire to know you, all else melted away.

~ Rumi

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Perukulam Village Promotes Reading Culture



Residents sit and read next to one of the 14 public mini-libraries in Perukulam, Kollam district, India's Kerala state, February 2024. (V. Vijesh)

Perukulam village in India's Kerala state has launched a reading initiative, setting up "book nests" inspired by the Little Free Library movement. With over a dozen mini-libraries, the village fosters community engagement and literacy. Villagers contribute to maintaining the bookshelves, offering books in Malayalam, Hindi, and English. Kerala's chief minister has recognized Perukulam as the state's "first book village," highlighting its commitment to promoting reading culture.

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Artistic Marvels Thrill Visitors at Balad Al-Fann



(AN photo by Saleh Fareed)

JEDDAH: The Artisan's Lane at Al-Balad stands as a testament to Saudi arts and crafts, offering an immersive experience for visitors eager to explore traditional textiles, pottery, and woodwork. Organized by Zawiya 97, this initiative not only preserves ancient crafts but also provides a platform for hands-on workshops, interactive sessions, and master classes.

Ahmed Angawi, CEO of Zawiya 97, views this dynamic hub as more than just a commercial venture, emphasizing its role in fostering creativity, skill-sharing, and community bonds. The increased foot traffic in Al-Balad has propelled local artisans to new heights of success, with demand for their goods and services reaching unprecedented levels.

Recently, 18 artisans from Saudi Arabia, Mexico, Iraq, Kurdistan, and Uzbekistan showcased their craftsmanship at Artisan's Lane, demonstrating carpet weaving, soap making, ceramic art, rug

weaving, and Arabic calligraphy. Angawi stressed the importance of empowering talented artisans to monetize their crafts, positioning Zawiya 97 as a vital participant in the Balad Al-Fann festival.

Among the featured artisans is Shorsh Saleh, a Kurdish mixed media artist whose works explore themes of migration, borders, and identity. Another standout is Hashim Al-Shawi, a Saudi business development expert renowned for his handcrafted soaps infused with local ingredients and traditional methods.

Inside his studio, visitors are mesmerized by Ayoob Abdul Hameed's intricate Arabic calligraphy, which he describes as conveying harmony, grace, and beauty. The ongoing Balad Al-Fann festival, themed "Past Forward," offers a myriad of projects combining light and sound, music, theatrical performances, exhibitions, and culinary delights, promising an unforgettable experience for all. ■

42nd Fajr Int'l Film Festival Ends with Gala Closing Ceremony



The 42nd Fajr International Film Festival concluded with a grand closing ceremony at Tehran's Milad Tower. The festival, which ran from February 6th to 11th, featured 621 submissions from 87 countries. In the Sodaye-Simorgh section, "Majnoon" won Best Film, while "The Morning of the Execution" earned Behrouz Afkhami the Best Director title. International

films competed in sections like Inter-Religion and Resistance, with standout winners including "The Summer of the Very Year" and "Heart of Raqqa." Notable awards also went to individuals like Tastia Jamil for her performance in "Fatima." Overall, the festival showcased diverse talent from around the world and celebrated outstanding contributions to cinema. ■

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International Union of Muslim Scholars Calls for Peaceful Demonstrations in Support of Jerusalem and Gaza



The International Union of Muslim Scholars has urged for "peaceful" demonstrations in support of Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip as part of events during World Jerusalem Week, observed from February 2 to 9. The call was made during a news conference held at the group's headquarters in Doha, Qatar, attended by prominent figures including the head of the Union, Ali Muhyiddin al-Qaradaghi, and General-Secretary Ali Muhammad al-Sallabi, along with scholars and

academics.

Highlighting Israel's recent attacks and blockade on Gaza, al-Qaradaghi emphasized the urgent need for global attention to the tragic events unfolding in Palestine. The Union urged Islamic formations, movements, and institutions worldwide to organize events during World Jerusalem Week, stressing the importance of Muslim solidarity and support.

The statement issued by the Union called for humanity to rally behind

the freedom of occupied Jerusalem and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and demanded an immediate end to the pressure and isolation in Gaza, including the lifting of the blockade. It encouraged discussions about Jerusalem during Friday sermons and peaceful marches to advocate for justice.

The group underscored the significance of Jerusalem as the first qibla for Muslims and the historical context of its liberation, calling on the international community to take a stand against the ongoing occupation and raids on the Al-Aqsa Mosque by Jewish settlers.

Founded in 2004, the International Union of Muslim Scholars aims to preserve Islamic identity, address internal and external threats, and adapt Islamic practices to contemporary challenges. Currently headquartered in Doha, Qatar, the Union is led by al-Qaradaghi, elected during its sixth general assembly. ■

Global Action Urged on Afghan Women's Rights: Munich Security Conference 2024

Foreign Ministers from twelve nations, including Albania, Canada, France, and Germany, convened at the Munich Security Conference 2024 to express grave concerns over escalating human rights abuses against Afghan women and girls. They denounced systemic gender persecution by Afghanistan's de facto authorities, calling it potential crimes against humanity.

Despite previous expectations, the Taliban's actions have worsened, with increased detentions of women and girls prompting urgent calls for their release.



Ministers highlighted the dire situation, where Taliban policies marginalize women, denying them education, employment, and basic freedoms.

In a unified statement, ministers urged the Taliban to adhere to international human rights laws and grant Afghan girls access to

education. They called for intensified global focus on Afghan women's rights, emphasizing that respecting human rights is crucial for Afghanistan's reintegration into the international community.

The Munich Security Conference 2024 served as a platform to address not only security concerns but also the urgent need for global action on women's rights in Afghanistan, reaffirming the international community's commitment to standing with Afghan women and girls amidst ongoing challenges. ■

Launch of Hillsinai Civil Service Academy at Markaz Knowledge City



CALICUT: A significant milestone was achieved at Markaz Knowledge City with the inauguration of the Hillsinai Civil Service Academy, a Civil Service Academy under the Hillsinai Centre of Excellence. The academy's logo was unveiled, symbolizing a partnership between Hillsinai and Vedhik Academy, a renowned UPSC coaching institution.

The launch ceremony was graced by esteemed dignitaries, including Dr. Alexander Jacob, IPS, former DGP and Dean of Academics at Vedhik IAS, and Dr. Muhammad Abdul Hakkim Azhari, Managing Director of Markaz Knowledge City. Dr. Abdussalam Muhammad, CEO of Markaz Knowledge City, presided over the program, with Dr. Babu Sebastian, former Vice-Chancellor of Kannur University and M.G. University, delivering the keynote address.

The event was further honored by the presence of notable personalities such as Linto Joseph MLA, Alex Thomas, President of Kodanchery Panchayat, and Adv. Thanveer Omar. Dr. Nizam Rahman, Boban Thomas, Dr. C. Abdussamad Pulikkad, and Sudhakaran.S also participated in the ceremony.

Dr. Abdurahman Chalil extended a warm welcome to all attendees, setting the tone for the event, while Parvez concluded the proceedings on a high note.

The launch of the Hillsinai Civil Service Academy marks a significant step towards empowering aspirants to excel in civil services examinations and contribute positively to society. With the combined expertise of Hillsinai and Vedhik Academy, aspiring civil servants can expect comprehensive guidance and support on their journey towards achieving their goals. ■

Iranian President Condemns US as Axis of Evil

TEHRAN: Iranian President Ebrahim Raeisi, speaking at the closing ceremony of the 40th international Quran competition in Tehran, denounced the United States as the center of the Axis of Evil. He criticized Washington's veto of UN resolutions calling for a ceasefire in Gaza,



highlighting the importance of Islamic countries adhering to Quranic teachings to prevent such actions. Raeisi emphasized the need for Islamic nations to unite around the Quran, the Prophet, and the Ahl al-Bayt, suggesting it as a solution to global injustices. He praised the resilience of Gazans against Israeli aggression, attributing their steadfastness to Quranic teachings. ■

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Grand Mosque Introduces 'Guidance Robot' for Fatwa Queries

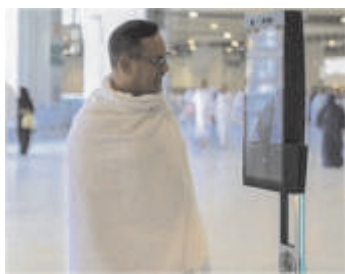
RIYADH: The Presidency of Religious Affairs at the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque has introduced a pioneering initiative employing artificial intelligence to address fatwa inquiries from visitors.

Dubbed the "guidance robot," this innovative solution aims to aid pilgrims and Umrah performers in understanding rituals and fatwas, boasting simultaneous translation into multiple languages.

Notably, the robot facilitates remote connection with religious leaders, enabling them to participate in answering visitor questions.

With support for 11 languages, including Arabic, English, and French, the robot offers a user-friendly experience via its 21-inch touch screen, tailored to meet the diverse needs of Grand Mosque visitors.

Equipped with four wheels



featuring a smart stop system, the robot ensures smooth maneuverability, while its front and bottom cameras transmit high-resolution images for enhanced interaction.

Moreover, the device incorporates

high-clarity speakers and a premium-quality microphone, ensuring seamless sound transmission over a 5 GHz wireless network.

The Presidency of Religious Affairs, recently established as an independent body, oversees the affairs of imams and muezzins of the Two Holy Mosques, including religious seminars and Islamic lessons. This initiative underscores Saudi Arabia's commitment to leveraging technology to enhance religious services.



Iran celebrated the 45th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution on February 11 with rallies held in over 1,400 towns and 35,000 villages across the country. Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi addressed participants in Tehran's festive processions.

Iranian Biotechnology Expert Maryam Tajabadi Receives Muslim World Rania Award 2024



THERAN: Maryam Tajabadi, an Iranian expert in biotechnology, has been honored with the prestigious Muslim World Rania Award 2024 in Malaysia.

The award ceremony took place on Friday, February 24, in Kuala Lumpur, where 14 exceptional women from the Islamic world were recognized and celebrated.

Each recipient of the Rania Award is distinguished for their achievements as economic

activists and entrepreneurs within their respective countries.

The Muslim World Rania Award aims to highlight and acknowledge the accomplishments of women across the globe, serving as a testament to their rights and contributions. Through showcasing exemplary women in the Muslim world, the award seeks to inspire and empower women worldwide.



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- Economic Aid:** Financial Assistance is provided to the petty businesswomen to establish their own business to earn their livelihood and become independent entrepreneur by discouraging them to

get involved in taking loans on Ribah.

- Tailoring Courses:** Free tailoring classes are conducted for women at Nayandahalli, Avalahalli and DJ Halli. Successful students are issued certificates after completion of a 3-month tailoring training program. On average **over 200 ladies** per year are trained and certified in Tailoring. The plan is to start similar services in all our Clinical operating areas.
- Soft Skills Development:** A state of the art Computer Training Center is operating at DJ Halli and Avalahalli. The objective is to empower students (both boys and girls) to equip them to meet the placement challenges by providing training in MS Office (Basic & Advance), Tally Pro, Hardware and Networking, Public Speaking, Spoken English, Interview Awareness sessions besides conducting workshops to improve skills and talent. Annually, on average **over 200 students** are trained and certified. The plan is to establish similar centers in all our Clinical operating areas.
- Nagarika Seva Kendra/Citizen Service Center:** As an extended activity, a Nagarika Seva Kendra (Citizen Service Center) is operating at DJ Halli helping link the eligible population to government aided schemes. Current services provided are: Aadhar card

correction, Voters' ID Card, PAN Card, Govt. sponsored scholarships, Senior Citizen Cards, Ration Card, Women/ Disability Pension, E-Shram card, Learners' Driving License, and much more. The Plan is to establish similar centers at all our Clinical operating areas.

The current MCT services is just a drop of water in the ocean. Unfortunately, the community needs and requirements are much more services, assistance, and guidance beyond imagination in every aspect of the day-to-day life and it's a sad and a bitter truth!

We humbly request you along with your family and friends to be more generous in your usual contributions in the form of **Zakath/Sadaqath** to MCT in this blessed month of Ramazan. May Allah SWT reward you and your loved ones immensely with enormous blessings and **AJR-E-AZEEM** in this world and in the hereafter! Ameen, Summa Ameen.

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King Abdullah Translation Award: Bridging Cultures

RIYADH: The King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Award for Translation, hosted by the King Abdulaziz Public Library in Riyadh, has received 226 nominations for its 11th edition.

The award celebrates cross-cultural understanding by recognizing exceptional translations across languages, fields, and cultures.

Dr. Saeed Al-Saeed, the award's secretary-general, revealed that submissions from 36 countries covered humanities and natural sciences, with works translated from and into Arabic. Submissions included 14 translations from Arabic to other



languages in humanities, 40 translations into Arabic in natural sciences, and 91 translations into Arabic in humanities.

The nominations included 51 individuals and 30 institutions, all contributing to the field of translation.

Currently under evaluation, these submissions aim to bridge linguistic and cultural divides, fostering knowledge exchange and constructive dialogue. Initiated in 2006, the award underscores Saudi Arabia's commitment to promoting global understanding and cooperation.

Evaluation criteria encompass six categories, including institutional efforts, individual contributions, and translations in humanities and natural sciences in both directions between Arabic and other languages. ■

Makkah's Grand Mosque Implements Stringent Guidelines for Ramadan Iftar Providers



(AN PHOTO)

The General Authority for the Affairs of the Grand Mosque and the Prophet's Mosque has introduced a rigorous application process for iftar meal service providers at the Grand Mosque in Makkah during Ramadan.

Providers must comply with specific conditions and standards, including electronic selection of meal locations and contracting with approved catering companies or Saudi Food and Drug Authority-endorsed entities. Individual philanthropists are limited to sponsoring two sufras, while charitable organizations and endowments may request up to 10 sufras. Meals must adhere to approved packaging conditions, and the presidency aims to enhance the visitor experience at the Grand Mosque during

Ramadan.

Additionally, iftar services will be provided at the Prophet's Mosque, with an expected distribution of over 8.5 million meals to fasting individuals.

Furthermore, Zamzam water services will cater to over 45 million beneficiaries, including the provision of 2.5 million bottles of Zamzam water and the setup of 18,000 Zamzam water coolers throughout the Prophet's Mosque. Moreover, 1,205 drinking water fountains have been prepared across the mosque's external courtyards. The announcement follows the historic record of 13.55 million Umrah pilgrims in 2023, as revealed by Saudi Minister of Hajj and Umrah Tawfiq Al-Rabiah during the third Hajj and Umrah Expo last month. ■

FDA Issues Warning Against Smart Watches for Blood Sugar Monitoring

WASHINGTON: The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued a warning against the use of smart watches or rings claiming to measure blood sugar levels without piercing the skin. Regardless of the manufacturer or brand, the FDA cautioned against the use of these devices, emphasizing the risk of



inaccurate measurements and potential life-threatening errors in

diabetes management. The agency clarified that it has not authorized or approved any smartwatch or smart ring for independent blood glucose level measurement. The FDA is actively working to prevent the illegal marketing of unauthorized tools purported to measure blood sugar levels. ■



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- **Zari Works:** (7) Batches (65) students got the certificates
- **Bihar School Examination Board:** Since 1993 to 2023, (109) Orphan girls and (83) Non-orphan girls passed the Matric Examination Bihar Board.
- **Qur'an Memorization:** 12 Students passed the Matric Examination with Hifz, Matric with Hifz
- **Annual Expenditure:** Above forty lakh (40 Lakh) rupees.
- **Source of Income:** Donation from Muslim Ummah.
- **Total Orphan Girls:** The Institution fulfills all the requirements of 75 orphan girls.
- **Sponsorship:** The annual expenditure of an orphan girl is (Rs.25,000/-)
- You also may join to this good deed bearing the annual expenditure of an orphan girl.

NOTE: It is appealed from the respected person of the community to have the attention to make orphan girls admitted in the institution. Lead them. I shall be grateful to you for this.

THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF CO-OPERATION ARE

- Zakat ● Donation ● Sadaquat ● Charity ● Ushra (Zakat of Agricultural Production) ● Dini (Islamic) Books ● Purchasing of Land and paying the debts. The Salaries of One (1) month of the staff, above Rupees one Lakh Fifty five thousand (Rs.1,50,000/-) ● Having constructed the rooms or halls on the name of your parents or relatives. =Donating the construction materials (Cement, Bars, Bricks or other things etc.) or its price.

Remember: 1 A Quality Education with low-expenses with Islamic education in peaceful Islamic environment, Open space, Islamic culture, Islamic Dress and Islamic Uniform, based on the syllabus of Bihar School Examination Board. 2 The Bank Interest which is illegal for the Muslims, donate that amount to orphan girls for fund to eradicate illiteracy of the poor and orphan girls and to spread education. 3 All facilities with food and lodging are provided free to the orphan girls just like a daughter whose father has died. 4 Hostel facility is also available for the external girls at their own expenses. 5 Here accounts are checked every year and audit is performed. Everything is like an open book. 6 Come and see yourself in the Institution how the orphan and non orphan girls live together.

The Institution is awaiting for your generous and sincere co-operation

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NOTE: See the documentary film NAZR-E-ENAYETH on the Internet "YOUTUBE" in which there is a brief history of Girls' and Boys' orphanages

Saudi Arabia Under Crown Prince MBS: Trajectory Towards Renaissance or Dystopia?

AYESHA MIRZA

Under the de facto leadership of Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman (MBS), Saudi Arabia has seen remarkable economic growth, surpassing \$1 trillion. However, behind this façade of prosperity lies a series of controversial practices and policies that have raised concerns both domestically and internationally.

MBS's ambitious plans include a departure from long-standing traditions and a shift towards a more "current interpretation" of Islam, challenging established norms such as stoning and amputations. This departure has sparked controversy within the



Islamic world, with dissent often met with harsh repercussions, as seen in the tragic case of Jamal Khashoggi.

Furthermore, Saudi's attempts to normalize relations with Israel and its silence on issues like the genocide in Gaza have led to accusations of betrayal against Palestine and raised doubts about its role as a leader in the Islamic world. The opening of an alcohol

shop and the transformation of sacred sites into tourist attractions further illustrate this departure from moral principles.

While some commend Saudi's economic growth and limited reforms, others question the legitimacy of MBS's rule and the long-term consequences of his policies. The frequent emphasis on his de facto leadership underscores the ongoing debate surrounding his rule and the direction in which Saudi Arabia is headed.

As Saudi Arabia navigates this tumultuous period, the question remains: Is it on the path to a Renaissance or a Dystopia? Only time will tell. ■

Saudi Representative Elected as Vice Chairperson of UN Human Rights Council Advisory Committee

RIYADH: Dr. Noura bint Mazyad Al-Amro has been elected as the vice chairperson of the UN Human Rights Council's advisory committee, representing the Asia Group at the Geneva-based organization. In her newly appointed role, Al-Amro will play a key role in advocating for human rights issues on behalf of the Asia



Group within the UN body. Expressing gratitude for her election, Al-Amro highlighted that her appointment signifies the international community's acknowledgment of Saudi Arabia's efforts in strengthening human rights laws and addressing related matters both domestically and globally. ■

Saudi Arabia Supports Yemeni Presidential Council and Economic Stability

Saudi Arabia has welcomed Yemeni President Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi's announcement regarding the launch of the Presidential Council under the Yemeni constitution and the Gulf initiative, along with its executive mechanisms.

The Kingdom has expressed its full support for the Presidential Council and its associated entities, aiming to enable them to effectively implement policies and initiatives for achieving security, stability, and ultimately resolving the crisis in Yemen, as reported by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

In a significant move, Saudi Arabia has pledged urgent support of \$3 billion to the Yemeni economy. This support includes \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia and the UAE to bolster the Central Bank of Yemen, along with an additional \$1 billion designated

for petroleum products and development.

Furthermore, Riyadh has called for an international conference to support Yemen's economy and announced a contribution of \$300 million to the United Nations aid response, aimed at addressing Yemen's humanitarian crisis. The overarching goal is to alleviate the suffering of the Yemeni people and enhance their living standards and access to essential services.

In addition to financial support, Saudi Arabia has urged the Presidential Council to initiate negotiations with the Houthi faction under UN supervision. The objective is to reach a comprehensive political solution, including a transitional period that fosters peace, development, and stability in Yemen, ultimately ensuring the well-being of its populace. ■



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All are requested to encourage the Management with their assistance **specially during the holy month of Ramazan which is a month of**

Charity. The students along with **Shoba-e-Hifz, Nazirah** they are also educated with **English, Kannada, Maths, Computer Science and all necessary courses up to SSLC**. It is hoped that your assistance to these deprived children will protect them from getting their lives destroyed and will, InshaAllah, make them educated responsible citizens of the Society.

SAHRI and IFTAR arrangements are made during Ramazan for the students and staff at the institution. Donors are requested to contribute for this arrangement or provide food grains etc, for this purpose.

May Allah grant acceptance to the noble acts of our donors who help the needy with the intention of obeying His commands and earning His pleasure and reward them highly. Aameen.

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AY 2023-24 to AY 2025-26



Syed Tahsin
Ahmed

Money is not everything, but money is something very essential. Some people are fond of saying that money cannot give happiness. This is a negative perception, especially a refuge for people who have not been successful in acquiring wealth in a competitive world. Money *does* give happiness to most people or in the least it can keep them away from suffering because of financial problems, loan borrowing, deprivation of essential needs and comforts, struggle to make both ends meet and being obligated to others in times of distress. We often hear people say: "money does not matter". Money *does* matter. Let us call a spade, a spade. When people say that money is not important to them, in most cases they are lying or they are just making a casual statement without meaning it or maybe because they are over-fed. I have seen such persons vigorously bargaining with the vegetable and fruit seller for a pittance of amount.

Money and Essential Needs

We need food, shelter and clothes for our survival, and we need money for that. Leaving apart the gifts, the other possessions in our house have been bought with money. We need money to survive in this world. Once our essential needs are met, we take strides to improve the quality of our life. What we eat, what we wear, how we travel, how much we invest in business and on properties depends on our paying capacity. The amount of money we have, determines the quality of education we can give to our children, the quality of medical facilities we can avail and the variety of leisure activities we can undertake. I have seen many persons who are negligent or lazy about earning money, but have always been in the forefront to receive scholarships, charities and zakat. In many slums where Muslims reside, you will find many men who do not work and who do not earn. The wife works as a maid servant or takes up any other small-time job to feed the family. This is the reality we easily gloss over.

Be a Giver and Not a Taker

I tell such persons to be a "giver" to society, rather than being a 'taker'. If you are earning well and are free from pressing financial needs, you will have the freedom to donate money for charities, to pay zakat, perform Haj and Umrah and spare time for community service. I may be faulted for advocating a materialistic attitude. For the detractors, let them ask a widow how she feels when her child is



Photo Courtesy: Freepik



deprived of taking the examination for non-payment of fees. Ask a poor person who is not able to clear the hospital bills of his wife who has undergone an operation. Ask the parents who are struggling to arrange money for their daughter's wedding. Earning a livelihood is a very important priority in the life of most of the people. Let us not discourage our youngsters from striving to do it with a pseudo philosophical talk. My message to our youth is to go forth. Strive. Sweat it out. Earn money. Become self-sufficient.

Building a Financially Strong Community

Society and community need citizens who are financially strong and economically prosperous. A poverty-stricken community without sound economic backing will become weak, voiceless and dependent on others. **It is estimated that the global Muslim population is on average around 20% poorer than the rest of the world.** We lag behind in metrics such as health, education, innovation and income equality. It is the collective duty of the *Ummah* to rectify this anomaly. When individuals become self-sufficient, the society becomes prosperous and marches ahead on the path of development. **Forever bemoaning that as per Sachar Committee Report we are at the bottom of the economic ladder is not going to help us in any way.** Nobody will improve our lot by offering it on a platter. Once Hazrath Umar (RA) saw some people sitting in the masjid just praying and doing *zikr*. On questioning, they explained that they were the ones who had *tawakkul* (perfect trust in Allah and reliance on Him alone) and therefore they did not go for work. Hazrath Umar (RA) in his customary fashion, beat them out of the masjid with a stick. Out of the ten Companions (*sahaba*) of prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who were promised *Jannat* (paradise), Hazrath Abdur Rahman bin Auf was extremely rich. Thus, it is evident that it is not a sin to be rich.

Good Deeds Which Only the Rich Can Do

Being rich is not a

disqualification for a person to get into paradise in the after-life, provided the wealth was acquired in a halal way and it was also spent in the right way. The following *Hadees* is pertinent in this regard: "There is no envy except in two: a person whom Allah has given wealth and he spends it in the right way, and a person whom Allah has given wisdom (i.e., religious knowledge) and he gives his decisions accordingly and teaches it to others" (Bukhari). In Islam, wealth belongs to Allah and He gives it to whom he wills. "Allah provides sustenance to whom He pleases, without measure" (Qur'an 3:37). The wise among the wealthy utilise this wealth given by Allah to earn benefits in the hereafter. One such deed is to dedicate their property as waqf for the benefit of the poor and needy. Here is one such glorious example.

An Outstanding Waqf

When the Muslims migrated to Madinah, there was a well in a part of Madinah which was the only source of water. A Jew who owned this well, charged exorbitant amounts for the water. Following an appeal given by Prophet Muhammad (saw), Hazrath Usman (RA) bought this well and opened it for Allah's sake and allowed people to fetch the water free of cost. This is one of the earliest Waqf in Islamic history. After the demise of Hazrath Usman (RA), plenty of date palms grew on the surrounding land which kept on increasing during the Ummayyad dynasty and also during the Abbassid period too. Much later, the Saudi Arabian government organised it into a modern plantation growing around 1550 date palm trees. The income thus generated is shared in two parts. Half of the income from the plantation is given in charity, mainly to widows and orphans and the other half is remitted to a Bank account which exists to this day in the name of Usman bin Affan. Utilising the amount accumulated over the years, a land was purchased around Masjid-e-Nabavi in Madinah. A big hotel with fourteen floors named "Waqf Hazrath Usman bin Affan Hotel" has been constructed on this land to

provide accommodation for visitors to the mosque. I was surprised to see this Hotel listed with the same name in many hotel booking apps. Half of the income from this Hotel is again given out as charity and the other half remitted to Hazrath Usman bin Affan's Bank account to be reinvested. It is said that the charity given from this Usman bin Affan waqf is more than 50 million Saudi Riyals annually. This Waqf shows the ideal way of developing waqf property, while at the same time continuing the charitable activities. This prudently managed waqf institution has added assets and kept on increasing its income, while continuing to give rewards (*sawab*) on charity to the original waqif (donor) Hazrath Usman (RA) for more than fourteen centuries.

You Can Take Money to Your Grave

Wealth is a means to an end and should not be loved as an end itself. The best of the rich persons are those who have earned their wealth by fair, ethical and halal means. After becoming rich they

acquire more responsibility and have to fulfil many obligations. In comparison, a poor person or a beggar will not have to answer for the mode of acquisition and spending of wealth or riches, since he doesn't own any. However, a rich person is in an advantageous position to give zakat, spend on charity and be of use to his community and society. The aim should be to become a 'zakat giver' and not a 'zakat taker'. Muslims should shed the attitude of asking: will you take money to the grave? (*kya paisa qabar ko lekarjaayega?*). Don't be surprised if my reply is 'yes'. Money can be taken to the grave provided your money has been invested in *sawab-e-jariya*. Money spent for good causes will earn rewards till the day of judgement and beyond, Allah willing.

It may be remembered that not everyone can become a billionaire. But, he or she can better his/her earnings by at least a few digits more. However, it is very very important that earning money should not distract one from the worship of Allah. The Qur'an and the *Ahadees* have laid down strict guidelines as to how money has to be earned by fair and halal means. Islam also encourages moderation in spending. Extravagant spending and miserliness are both discouraged and Muslims are asked to strike a balance between the two. To conclude, it has to be remembered that money is a good servant but a bad master.

(The author is a retired KAS officer and can be contacted at tahsin789@yahoo.com)

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Understanding Optimism: Embracing a Positive Mindset



Arshad Sayyed

Optimism, often portrayed as *"thinking the best and expecting the best,"* is more than just maintaining a positive outlook. Derived from French and Latin origins, optimism is a mental attitude grounded in confidence and hope, fostering the belief that despite current challenges, tomorrow holds the promise of improvement.

But does optimism truly hold merit? Can it genuinely shape a brighter future, or is it merely wishful thinking? Multiple studies indicate that optimism not only works but also contributes to greater success and better health outcomes. It serves as a shield against stress, depression, and anxiety, offering individuals a resilient mindset to navigate life's adversities.

To comprehend optimism fully, it's essential to contrast it with pessimism. Pessimism, driven by a mindset that sees danger in every opportunity, tends to hinder progress. Those with a pessimistic outlook often shy away from risks, limiting their achievements



and stunting personal growth.

Real optimism, however, transcends blind positivity. It acknowledges challenges but remains steadfast in the belief that concerted effort and perseverance will yield favorable outcomes. Unlike blind optimism, which relies solely on wishful thinking, genuine optimism is grounded in proactive measures and a commitment to continuous improvement.

Optimism is not merely a mindset; it's a way of life. By consciously choosing to see the good in every situation, individuals can reframe their thinking patterns and harness the power of their minds. This shift in perspective not only alters neurochemistry but also sets the stage for achievement and fulfillment.

But how does one cultivate optimism? It starts with gratitude, recognizing and appreciating the blessings amidst difficulties. Training the mind to perceive setbacks as temporary hurdles rather than insurmountable

barriers fosters resilience. Accepting compliments graciously and embracing criticism as constructive feedback further nurtures an optimistic mindset.

Optimism isn't just about wishful thinking; it's about taking action. Setting clear goals, prioritizing tasks, and maintaining a positive routine are instrumental in reinforcing optimism. Avoiding distractions, practicing self-discipline, and engaging in activities that promote mental well-being are also crucial steps on the path to optimism.

Ultimately, optimism isn't just a mindset; it's a transformative force that shapes our reality. By embracing optimism, individuals can overcome challenges, achieve success, and lead happier, more fulfilling lives. ■



"Optimism is a mindset one should carry for a lifetime to live a more fulfilling, satisfied, and happy life."



True Realities: Reflections on Death

Maulana Abdul Majid Dariyabadi



In November 1932, amidst the bustling city of Allahabad, a profound realization dawned upon its inhabitants. The news of Judge Banerjee's sudden passing reverberated through the streets, leaving a poignant reminder of life's unpredictability. Despite his esteemed position and access to the best medical care, Judge Banerjee succumbed to the inevitable fate that awaits us all. Similarly, Sir Ali Imam, a prominent figure in the legal and political spheres, met his end in Ranchi, far from the reach of doctors and loved ones. His wealth and status could not shield him from the grasp of death. These incidents serve as stark reminders that no amount of wealth or influence can defy destiny. The illusion of control dissipates when faced with the

certainty of death. The Quranic verse resonates with truth: when the appointed time arrives, no amount of preparation or resistance can delay it.

Human arrogance blinds us to the reality of our mortality. We deceive ourselves into believing that we have control over our fate, only to be humbled by the inevitability of death. The sudden demise of Judge Banerjee and Sir Ali Imam serves as a wake-up call, urging us to confront our mortality and live with humility and gratitude.

As we reflect on these sobering realities, let us heed the lesson they impart. Death spares no one, regardless of status or wealth. It is a reminder of our shared humanity and the fragility of life. May we strive to live with humility, gratitude, and a deep appreciation for the precious gift of life. ■



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- **Bihar School Examination Board:** Every year cent per cent (100%) result
- **Distance Education:** (Approved by Aligarh Muslim University)
- **Study Centre:** The Gaya Muslim Orphanage, Admission is going on for I.A., B.A., M.A., and Library Science (BLIS) for the session of 2024-25
- **Sponsorship:** Annual expenditure of an orphan student is (Rs. 25,000/-)
- **Annual Expenditure:** More than average (30) Lakh Rupees.
- **60 Orphan Students:** The Institution bears all the expenditure of 60 Orphan students.
- **Sources of Income:** Donation of Muslim Ummah

THE DIFFERENT WAYS OF CO-OPERATION ARE

- Zakat ● Donation ● Sadaquat: Ushra (Zakat of Agricultural production)
- **Chirm-e-Qurbani** or its price ● The Annual expenditure of an orphan student.
- Having Constructed the rooms or halls in the name of ancestors. ● Having co-operated i.e., the institution in possible form to get the compensation from Allah.

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Note: It is appealed from the respected persons of the community to have the attention to make orphan boys admitted in the institution. Lead them. I shall be grateful to you for this.

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Wendy Díaz

Before becoming parents, many people believe they have parenting all figured out, only to find that reality hits them hard when the baby arrives. Parenting is a journey filled with ups and downs, and making mistakes is inevitable. Here are 20 common mistakes new parents tend to make, along with insights on how to learn from them:

1. Forgetting Self-Care:

- Prioritize self-care, as it is a spiritual duty in Islam.
- Take care of physical and mental well-being to avoid burnout.

2. Judging Other Parents:

- Avoid passing judgment on other parents.
- Cultivate humility and recognize that parenting challenges are universal.

3. Repeating Parents' Mistakes:

- Reflect on your own parents' methods.
- Pursue wisdom and self-improvement, learning from past experiences.

4. Setting Unrealistic Expectations:

- Embrace moderation and balance in parenting.
- Set realistic goals and trust in Allah's plan.

5. Comparing Your Child to Others:

- Appreciate the diversity among individuals.

- Celebrate your child's unique strengths and qualities.

6. Not Asking for Help:

- Seek help when needed; it's a sign of strength.

- Prioritize supplication to Allah and seek support from trusted family and friends.

7. Neglecting Spousal Needs:

- Maintain a healthy relationship with your spouse.

- Recognize the shared responsibility of nurturing children.

8. Not Setting Boundaries with Relatives:

- Establish clear limitations with extended family.
- Have your private space to raise children without interference.

9. Spoiling the Firstborn:

- Avoid excessive pampering of the first child.
- Establish healthy boundaries and instill values of responsibility.

10. Not Educating Yourself:

- Seek knowledge about parenting responsibilities.

- Acquire insights into child development from both Islamic and modern sources.

11. Living Vicariously Through Your Child:

- Allow your child to develop their own identity.

- Recognize and nurture your child's unique talents and strengths.



Photo source Pixabay

12. Being Impatient and Lacking Emotional Regulation:

- Develop patience and emotional intelligence.

- Control your own emotions to set an example for your children.

13. Not Enjoying the Moment:

- Prioritize quality time with your child.

- Embrace the responsibilities of parenthood for joy and fulfillment.

14. Not Listening to Your Child:

- Be attentive and understand your child's cues.

- Identify and accept your child's feelings to respond effectively.

15. Not Trusting Your Own Instincts:

- Trust your own abilities in parenting.

- Combine intuition with informed decision-making.

16. Not Healing Childhood Traumas:

- Engage in self-reflection and healing.
- Actively participate in self-care and support mechanisms.

17. Excluding Non-Muslim Relatives:

- Preserve religious values while maintaining ties of kinship.

- Keep a good relationship with relatives regardless of their faith.

18. Isolating Your Child from the Real World:

- Allow children to engage responsibly with the world.

- Instill core values while preparing children for adulthood.

19. Expecting Each New Child to Be Easy:

- Recognize that each child is different.

- Be ready for new challenges and responsibilities with each child.

20. Learning from Mistakes:

- Embrace mistakes as opportunities for growth.

- Seek support, stay flexible, and learn from experiences to become a confident and effective parent.

Parenting is a continuous learning process, and acknowledging mistakes is a vital step toward becoming better parents. Allah has entrusted parents with their children for a reason, and the journey involves growth, adaptation, and forgiveness. Alhamdulillah, all thanks and praise are for Allah alone. ■



Moin Qazi

Zakat: The Spiritual Essence of Islamic Charity



The Quran provides both a spiritual framework for the possession of wealth and practical guidelines for its dispensation. Along with fasting and prayers, zakat is a cardinal act of piety in the holy month of Ramadan.

For Muslims, charity is a central aspect of their faith and practice. Governed by a worldview in which all things come from God and finally return to God, Muslims are taught to live as trustees of God's blessings. Along with fasting and prayers, zakat is a cardinal act of piety in the holy month of Ramadan.

The Quran provides both a spiritual framework for the possession of wealth and practical guidelines for its dispensation. If we believe that all things, ultimately, belong to God, then it behoves us to spend everything by the plan of God. Frugality with self and generosity with others is the underlying Quranic message of charity (Q2:219): "They ask thee how much they are to spend; say: 'What is beyond your needs'". The Quranic word for charity is zakat. Other than zakat, which is obligatory, people can also offer alms voluntarily known as sadaqah. Muslims are obliged to purify their wealth by calculating

2.5 per cent of their assets including money in bank accounts, shares, investments, pensions, gold, etc. and giving it to the less fortunate. Zakat represents the minimum amount of charity that each individual is obliged to give as a virtuous human being.

The zakat is levied on five categories of property foodgrains; fruit; camels, cattle, sheep and goats; gold and silver; and movable goods and it is payable each year after one year's possession.

Recipients of zakat include the poor and needy, the collectors themselves and "those whose hearts it is necessary to conciliate"

e.g., discordant tribesmen, debtors, volunteers in jihad (holy war) and pilgrims.

Deeply embedded in the Islamic concept of zakat are the notions of welfare, altruism and justice, which can be seen as a way of harnessing human potential to resolve insurmountable challenges to human society. In other words, charity and altruism are rooted in the basic concern for the welfare of others, while Islam has added to it the notion of justice, which is seen as a way of building a just and equitable society.

Zakat takes the egotism out of the traditional Bedouin personality. Instead of exhibiting their

reckless, excessive liberality, they make a regular contribution to the weaker members of the tribe.

It is the human predilection for riches that the Quran cautions against, yet it acknowledges that spiritually immature souls may jeopardise their moral standing by indulging in reckless acts of charity that leave them destitute. Some verses (including Q17:29 and 25:67) speak of maintaining a balance between extravagance and parsimony. This is in recognition of human nature, which has the dual impulses of compassion and an inherent love of wealth.

In this way, Islam's legal teachings

counsel temperance and prudence whereas Islam's spiritual teachings urge selflessness and generosity.

An oft-repeated story in the Muslim world tells of a Shah in Persia who came upon an old man planting an olive tree, which takes decades to produce good fruit. When asked why he is planting a tree that will not benefit him, the old man replied: "Those who came before me planted, and we benefitted. I am planting so that those who come after me shall benefit."

Intrinsic to the obligation of giving in Islam is the universal truism that a love of humanity and a love of God beget charitable deeds. ■

"Maulana Dariyabadi urges readers to consider whom they admire and seek to emulate: the prophets who selflessly served their communities without seeking material gain, or the worldly dignitaries who pursue wealth and status. He suggests that those who truly value the example of the prophets should aspire to follow their selfless path rather than chasing after worldly rewards."

Moqheeta Mehboob

Embarking on the Path of Leadership: My Journey of Discovery



When I first pondered the concept of leadership, my mind conjured images of public figures and individuals in positions of authority. To me, leaders were those who held power and control over others, whether as heads of state, community figures, or managers in various settings. However, my perspective underwent a profound transformation after attending Sadathullah sir's leadership workshop.

The workshop, spanning 75 intense and engaging hours, challenged my preconceived notions and broadened my understanding of leadership. Through Sadathullah sir's insightful sessions, I began to grasp the true essence of leadership beyond mere titles or positions of power.

I learned that a leader is defined not by their authority but by their qualities and actions. A leader possesses a clear vision, unwavering willpower, and a wealth of tolerance, persistence, and perseverance. They prioritize the needs of others above their own and are dedicated to serving and ensuring the well-being of those under their care.

Sadathullah sir helped me realize

that anyone entrusted with the responsibility of another person, no matter how small, should exhibit these leadership qualities. Whether it's a husband caring for his wife, a father nurturing his family, or a mother tending to her children, everyone has the potential to be a leader in their own right.

I came to understand that leadership is not about wielding authority for personal gain but about selflessly serving others. A true leader is the last to sleep and the first to rise, ensuring that everyone under their watch is fed, safe, and supported.

The journey of comprehending leadership was akin to assembling a jigsaw puzzle. With each

revelation and insight gained during the workshop, I pieced together a clearer understanding of what it means to be a leader.

It took time and patience to fully grasp the concept, but through reflection and exploration, I now see that leadership is not confined to certain individuals or roles. Instead, it is a quality inherent in everyone, waiting to be cultivated and expressed in various aspects of life.

Furthermore, I realized the crucial role of the family unit within the broader community. Each family serves as a vital component in the functioning of society, and strong family bonds contribute to the overall well-being and progress of a community. Unfortunately,

discord within families can lead to unrest and hinder societal advancement.

In my observation, the male head of the household, often referred to as the patriarch, holds significant influence over family dynamics. However, true leadership within the family requires more than just authority. It demands qualities

such as empathy, effective communication, and emotional intelligence.

Similarly, mothers too play a pivotal role in fostering a harmonious family environment. Both parents must lead by example, promoting mutual respect and understanding among family members.

Moreover, I recognized that I am a leader of my own self. I am responsible for guiding my own actions, emotions, and decisions, prioritizing the well-being of others before myself.

In conclusion, my journey to understanding leadership has been enlightening and transformative. True leadership is not about authority but about service, compassion, and selflessness. Thanks to Sadathullah sir, armed with this newfound understanding, I am committed to embracing my role as a leader in my own sphere of influence. ■

“My journey to understanding leadership has been enlightening and transformative. True leadership is not about authority but about service, compassion, and selflessness.”

Transformative Insights:

Dr. Tanveer Durdana Reflects on the Discover Yourself Workshop

Participating in the Discover Yourself Workshop held in Hyderabad from 10th to 12th February 2024 has sparked a profound transformation within me. As a seasoned medical doctor with over three decades of experience, my understanding of health, mental well-being, and holistic wellness has undergone a significant enrichment. The guidance of Sadath Khan sir has been instrumental in illuminating my inner world, strengthening my faith, and unveiling my best self. Through the immersive experiences of the workshop, I've gained clarity on the detrimental impact of assumptions, which often ensnare us in a cycle of suffering. By transitioning from the realm of assumptions to the realm of Reality, I have discovered a newfound sense of freedom and lightness, akin to that of a butterfly emerging from its cocoon.

This journey of self-discovery has facilitated a reconnection with my authentic self characterized by gratitude, generosity, responsibility, forgiveness, and love. This newfound authenticity



has not only brought me inner peace but has also ignited a deep-seated desire to extend that peace to others.

As I integrate these transformative insights into both my personal and professional life, I am reminded of the profound impact it can have on my interactions with patients and colleagues alike. I am committed to staying connected with the Discover Yourself community,

recognizing that true transformation requires ongoing practice and effort.

Reflecting on my experience during the workshop, I am filled with gratitude for the opportunity to

embark on this journey of self-discovery. I wholeheartedly recommend this workshop to my fellow colleagues, healthcare professionals, and anyone seeking inner peace and personal growth. It has left an indelible mark on my life, and I am dedicated to continuing my journey towards self-discovery and inner peace while extending a helping hand to others along the way. ■

“This journey of self-discovery has facilitated a reconnection with my authentic self characterized by gratitude, generosity, responsibility, forgiveness, and love. This newfound authenticity has not only brought me inner peace but has also ignited a deep-seated desire to extend that peace to others.”

«Page 6

Controversy Surrounds Uttarakhand Uniform Civil Code: Targeting Muslim Identity

that it will be applicable across states outside of the pre-existing legislation on the subject. Another question that emerges and begs for an answer is as to how state legislation can override or repeal a central legislation without even naming it.

The legal issues with the code will definitely be dealt with by the courts in due time, as some of the provisions appear to be excessive and unconstitutional. It is sad that a law and a legislative assembly are being used to fool the electorate into thinking that some sort of uniform civil code is enacted when in truth it is far from it. The law will lead to a multiplicity of proceedings and confusion.

According to the Muslim Personal Law (Sharia) Application Act 1937, matters relating to marriage, divorce, and inheritance will be governed by the same law. Section 3 of the Act also provides for their procedure. But the said Uttarakhand law is giving rise to multiple proceedings simultaneously, which is feared to further burden our already overburdened courts. Here another question arises as to how a state law can supersede or abrogate a central law, and that too without naming it. We are sure that some of the legal

contradictions will be resolved by the courts in due course, as some of the clauses are transgressive and unconstitutional. It is a sad fact that, in the name of the Uniform Civil Code, a legislative assembly is trying to deceive the voters of the country that it has really done a great job, although it has not. This proposed law will only lead to a multiplicity of actions and mere confusion.

It is also important to clarify here that last July the country's minorities, Dalits and Adivasis, held a joint press conference and rejected the Uniform Civil Code by saying that it was given by the Constitution of India. It is against fundamental rights and against religious and cultural diversity. If the Scheduled Tribes have been exempted from the proposed Tarakhand Act, then how can it be declared a uniform civil code when the state has a significant population of tribals and many exemptions have been given to the majority section, which makes it a candidate? Dr Ilyas.

Dr. Ilyas said with emphasis that the real target of the law is only Muslims. There is a danger that Uttarakhand's UCC law is likely to be the template for similar efforts by a clutch of other BJP-ruled states. ■

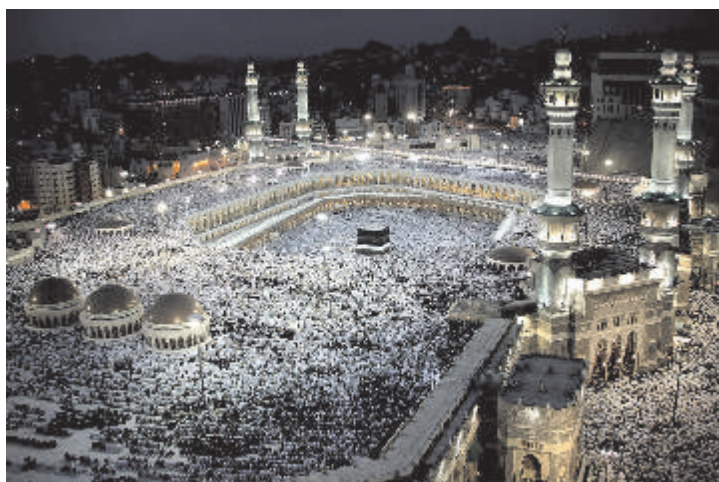
1. Spiritual Reward: Ramadan is considered the holiest month in the Islamic calendar, marked by fasting, prayer, and spiritual reflection. Performing Umrah during Ramadan is believed to yield greater spiritual rewards and blessings due to the heightened spiritual atmosphere and the increased emphasis on worship during this sacred time.

2. Month of Mercy and Forgiveness: Ramadan is known as the month of mercy and forgiveness, during which Muslims seek Allah's forgiveness and mercy through fasting, prayer, and acts of charity. Performing Umrah during Ramadan is seen as an opportunity to seek repentance, purify the soul, and earn Allah's blessings and forgiveness.

3. Commemoration of Revelation: Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an, the

Why Is Umrah in Ramadan So Special?

Umrah performed during the holy month of Ramadan holds a special significance in Islam for several reasons:



holy book of Islam, was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace

be upon him). By performing Umrah during Ramadan, Muslims

commemorate this significant event and reaffirm their commitment to the teachings of the Qur'an.

4. Night of Power (Laylat al-Qadr): Laylat al-Qadr, also known as the Night of Power, is believed to occur during one of the last ten nights of Ramadan, with special emphasis on the odd-numbered nights. It is considered the holiest night of the year, surpassing a thousand months in blessings. Performing Umrah during Ramadan increases the likelihood of being present in the Haram during this auspicious night, allowing pilgrims to engage in worship and seek Allah's mercy

and blessings.

5. Prophetic Tradition: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) encouraged Muslims to perform Umrah during Ramadan, emphasizing its virtues and rewards. Many companions of the Prophet also undertook Umrah during Ramadan, following his example and seeking the blessings associated with it.

In summary, Umrah performed during Ramadan holds special significance due to the spiritual rewards, the emphasis on seeking forgiveness and mercy, the commemoration of the revelation of the Qur'an, the significance of Laylat al-Qadr, and the Prophetic tradition encouraging its performance during this blessed month. It is an opportunity for Muslims to deepen their connection with Allah, purify their souls, and seek His blessings and forgiveness. ■

During the sacred month of Ramadan, Muslims are encouraged to emulate the noble example set by the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) and his Companions. Reflecting on the teachings of Islam, particularly regarding the importance of the Qur'an, prayer, generosity, and righteous conduct, offers valuable guidance on maximizing the spiritual benefits of this blessed time.

1. Dedication to Qur'anic Recitation: The companions of the Prophet and early Muslims prioritized the recitation of the Qur'an during Ramadan. Some notable examples include Al-Aswad ibn Yazid, who completed the Qur'an every two nights, and Qatadah, who read it every seven days but increased to every three days during Ramadan. This devotion to the Qur'an demonstrates the significance of engaging with the divine revelation during this special month.

2. Night Vigil Prayer: The companions also devoted themselves to lengthy prayers during the nights of Ramadan, following the example of Umar ibn Al-Khattab who instructed

The Exemplary Practices of Our Predecessors During Ramadan



leaders like Ubayy ibn Ka'b and Tamim Ad-Dari to lead extensive prayers. These nightly vigils, characterized by the recitation of lengthy portions of the Qur'an, exemplified the deep spiritual connection sought during Ramadan.

3. Generous Almsgiving: The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) was renowned for his generosity, which reached its peak during Ramadan. His meeting with the Angel Gabriel during this month heightened his charitable spirit, inspiring him to be more generous than ever. This tradition of giving was continued by

individuals like Hammad ibn Abi Sulayman, who provided food for 500 people daily during Ramadan.

4. Guarding One's Speech: Fasting in Ramadan goes beyond abstaining from food and drink; it also involves refraining from false speech, obscenity, and ill-mannered behavior. The Prophet emphasized the importance of guarding one's tongue, stating that Allah does not require fasting from those who engage in false speech and actions. This highlights the need for mindfulness and restraint in speech and behavior throughout Ramadan.

5. Avoiding Backbiting and Lying: The fasting person is urged to refrain from backbiting and lying, as these actions detract from the value of fasting and may lead to its unacceptance by Allah. Instead, individuals are encouraged to maintain dignity and composure, avoiding conflicts and insults even when

provoked. By upholding righteous conduct and avoiding sinful behavior, one's fast is upheld in its true spirit.

In conclusion, the practices of our pious predecessors serve as a source of inspiration and guidance for Muslims striving to make the most of Ramadan. By prioritizing Qur'anic recitation, prayer, generosity, and righteous conduct, believers can enhance their spiritual connection and draw closer to Allah during this blessed month. ■

"The five daily prayers, and from one Friday prayer to the next, and from one Ramadan to another, are an expiation for sins committed in between them, provided that one avoids the major sins" [Bukhari].

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Losing Weight Safely During Ramadan



Fasting during the holy month of Ramadan is not just a spiritual obligation but also an opportunity to cleanse our bodies. However, losing weight during Ramadan requires careful attention and adherence to healthy practices. While the Prophet Muhammad (SAW) advised fasting to heal our bodies, weight gain can still occur if we are not mindful of our eating habits. Here are some tips to help you maintain a healthy weight during Ramadan:

1. Avoiding Ramadan Pitfalls:

- Be cautious of overeating, especially during iftar (breaking of fast).
- Steer clear of trigger foods like sugary treats that can lead to excessive consumption.
- Ensure a balanced iftar with dates, water, and a moderate meal followed by another small meal after Tarawih prayers.

2. Be Mindful of Portions:

- Keep track of your food intake with an eating diary to avoid overindulgence.
- Recognize the difference between normal meal patterns and the larger meals often consumed during Ramadan.

3. Stick to Familiar Foods:

- Avoid introducing new or unusual foods during Ramadan to

minimize stress and potential allergic reactions.

- Discover your trigger foods and ideal foods through observation or consultation with a naturopath.

4. Choose Nutrient-Dense Foods:

- Opt for wholesome foods recommended by the Quran, avoiding excessive salt, processed foods, and sugary treats.
- Emphasize vegetables and fruits while limiting grains, beans, milk products, and meat to appropriate proportions.

5. Incorporate Bitter and Watery Foods:

- Include bitter and watery foods in your diet to aid weight loss, such as amaranth, quinoa, oats, cucumber, and asparagus.
- Use metabolism-boosting spices like cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, and ginger in your cooking.

6. Maintain Exercise Routine:

- Don't neglect physical activity during Ramadan, as exercise helps maintain metabolism and lymphatic circulation.
- Aim for moderate exercise like brisk walking for at least twenty minutes daily to promote weight loss.

7. Watch Your Caffeine Intake:

- Limit consumption of

caffeinated beverages like coffee and tea, as they can contribute to weight gain and dehydration.

- Consider switching to herbal teas known for their weight loss benefits and metabolism-boosting properties.

8. Prioritize Adequate Sleep and Nutrition:

- Ensure sufficient sleep and avoid skipping suhur (pre-fast meal) to prevent metabolic slowdown and weight gain.

- Be cautious with vitamin supplements, as excessive intake may lead to unintended weight gain and health issues.

9. Focus on Spiritual Reflection:

- Remember that Ramadan is a time for spiritual growth and reflection, not just weight loss.
- Prioritize the teachings of Ramadan and follow the Prophet's guidance on maintaining good health.

By adopting these mindful practices, you can navigate Ramadan with a focus on both spiritual well-being and physical health. Let this holy month be a time of renewal for your body, mind, and soul. ■

Don't Miss Ramadan's First Night: A Special Program for Divine Blessings

Wael Shihab

As Ramadan approaches, Muslims anticipate the first night with great reverence, as it holds unique significance.

According to Prophetic hadiths, this night is distinguished by Allah's favorable gaze upon His servants, offering them mercy and forgiveness.

To ensure one benefits from this divine favor, it is advised to engage in a special program tailored for the occasion:

1. Repentance: Resolve to refrain from evil deeds and sincerely repent for past wrongdoings.

2. Intention for Fasting: Make a firm intention to fast the entire month of Ramadan, seeking reward solely from Allah.

3. Night Dhikr: Engage in remembrance of Allah shortly before sunset on the last day of Sha'ban, preferably in the mosque.

4. Maghrib Prayer: Offer the Maghrib Prayer in congregation at the mosque (sisters may pray at home).

5. Spiritual Retreat: Sit in the mosque with the intention of **itikaf, immersing oneself in dhikr and Qur'an recitation**



until Isha' Prayer.

6. **Isha' and Tarawih: Pray Isha' and Tarawih prayers with devotion and sincerity.**

7. Spread Joy: Smile and extend warm Ramadan

greetings to fellow Muslims.

8. Virtuous Deeds: Before sleeping, engage in acts of charity, Qur'an recitation, dhikr, or visiting the sick.

9. Suhur and Qiyam: Wake up for the predawn meal (suhur) and offer Qiyam al-Layl (Night Vigil Prayer) before Fajr.

10. Fajr Prayer: Attend the mosque for Fajr Prayer (sisters may pray at home).

11. Post-Fajr Devotion: Sit after Fajr, reciting Qur'an and making dhikr, and pray Duha after sunrise.

12. Supplication: Remember to pray for Muslims facing hardships worldwide.

13. Earnest Supplication: Throughout the night, fervently ask Allah for His mercy and forgiveness.

14. Encouragement: Encourage family and friends to partake in the blessings of Ramadan's first night.

May Allah shower His favors and blessings upon all, guiding them to righteousness in this world and the hereafter. Amen. ■



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Boosting Your Spirit During Ramadan

To boost your spirit during Ramadan and make the most of this blessed month, consider the following tips:



1. Du'a' (Supplication): Start by asking Almighty Allah to make this Ramadan the most spiritually uplifting one you've ever experienced. Complete reliance on Allah is essential for spiritual growth.

2. Clear Your Mind: Take time each day to disconnect from distractions like TV, radio, and electronic devices. Find a quiet place to reflect on your relationship with Allah and your purpose in life. Focus your thoughts on Him and your efforts to fulfill your purpose.

3. Learn About Great Muslim Figures: Read or listen to stories of great Muslim figures, such as the Companions of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). These stories inspire and inform us about their unwavering faith against all odds.

4. Connect to the Qur'an: Make the Qur'an a central part of your Ramadan experience. Whether

you're a regular reader or just starting out, aim to connect with the Qur'an in a new way. Choose a

theme or Surah to focus on, and consider keeping a Qur'anic journal to record your reflections.

5. Take Care of Others: Extend a helping hand to those in need during Ramadan. Whether it's supporting someone who is struggling or volunteering your time to feed the hungry, the spiritual benefits of helping others are immense.

6. Feed the Hungry: Despite your own hunger during fasting, make an effort to feed the hungry in your community. Donate to food pantries, volunteer at soup kitchens, or simply offer a meal to someone in need.

7. Give Up One Bad Habit: Identify a lifelong bad habit and commit to giving it up during Ramadan. Whether it's anger, apathy, or impatience, focus on practicing the opposite behavior and strive for positive change.

8. Utilize the Nights of Power: The last ten nights of Ramadan are known as the Nights of Power, during which profound spiritual experiences can occur. Take advantage of these nights for intense du'a' (supplication), self-reflection, and seeking forgiveness.

By implementing these tips, you can enhance your spiritual experience during Ramadan and draw closer to Allah. Remember that Ramadan is a time for self-improvement, reflection, and deepening your connection with your Creator. ■

Maintaining the Spirit of Worship Beyond Ramadan: Practical Steps and Solutions

The transition from the heightened devotion of Ramadan to a potential decline in spiritual practice afterward is a common challenge for many. Here, we explore the reasons behind this shift and offer practical solutions to help maintain the spirit of worship throughout the year.

1. Sincerity in Worship: Often, acts of worship are performed with mixed intentions, such as seeking recognition from others. To counter this, focus on sincerity by intending every act solely for the pleasure of Allah, seeking His reward, and benefiting both in this life and the Hereafter.

2. Concentration in Worship: Lack of concentration during worship can diminish its spiritual impact. Strive for mindfulness and contemplation in every act of worship, avoiding excessive rituals and focusing on quality over quantity.

3. Moderation in Worship: Avoid overexertion in worship beyond one's capacity. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) emphasized moderation, urging



“Remember, spiritual growth is a gradual process that requires patience, persistence, and time. Nurturing the soul requires ongoing effort and dedication.”

believers to perform deeds within their means.

4. Choosing Good Company: Surround yourself with positive influences and supportive companions who encourage obedience to Allah. Good company serves as a shield against negative influences and strengthens one's resolve in worship.

5. Consistency in Worship: Avoid abrupt discontinuation of worship after Ramadan. Instead, continue with acts of devotion, albeit in a reduced capacity if necessary. Consistency reinforces the spiritual gains made during Ramadan and prevents a sudden decline in motivation.

6. Engage in Lawful Recreation: Balance worship with permissible forms of relaxation and recreation. Engage in activities that rejuvenate the soul without compromising religious principles.

7. Supplication for Spiritual Growth: Pray for yourself and others who may struggle with maintaining spiritual consistency. The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) emphasized the efficacy of sincere supplication for fellow believers. Remember, spiritual growth is a gradual process that requires patience, persistence, and time. Just as the Quran and the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) nurtured the companions, nurturing the soul requires ongoing effort and dedication. ■

Understanding Ramadan as the Month of the Qur'an



Ramadan holds a special significance for Muslims as it is not only a month of fasting and spiritual growth but also a month deeply connected to the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam. This connection is rooted in several aspects of Islamic teachings and traditions.

1. Revelation of the Qur'an: Allah mentions in the Qur'an that Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed, emphasizing its role as a guide for humanity. This divine revelation began with the Prophet Muhammad's retreat to Mount Hira during Ramadan, where he received the first verses of the Qur'an from the Angel Gabriel. Thus, Ramadan marks the initiation of the prophetic mission and the spread of Islam.

2. Recitation of the Qur'an: During Ramadan, it is customary for Muslims to increase their recitation of the Qur'an. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) would engage in recitation and reflection upon the Qur'an, particularly during the nights of Ramadan. It is also recommended for Muslims to complete the recitation of the entire Qur'an during the month, often done through special prayers called Taraweeh, where portions of the

Qur'an are recited in congregation.

3. Connection with Gabriel: Throughout Ramadan, the Angel Gabriel would descend to review the Qur'an with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), ensuring its preservation and transmission to the Muslim community. This spiritual connection with Gabriel underscores the significance of Ramadan as a time for divine guidance and revelation.

4. Spiritual Growth and Reflection: Ramadan serves as an opportunity for Muslims to deepen their connection with the Qur'an through reflection, study, and application of its teachings. The fasting, prayer, and acts of charity performed during this month are all inspired by the guidance found in the Qur'an, leading to spiritual growth and self-improvement.

In conclusion, Ramadan is truly the month of the Qur'an, as it commemorates the revelation of this divine scripture and provides Muslims with the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with it. Through recitation, reflection, and adherence to its teachings, believers seek to draw closer to Allah and attain spiritual fulfillment during this blessed time. ■

The Complexity of Sin and the Chained Devils in Ramadan

In the sacred month of Ramadan, Muslims observe fasting as a spiritual commitment to Allah. It is commonly believed that during this month, devils are chained, freeing believers from their influence. However, the occurrence of sin during Ramadan prompts a deeper exploration of its roots.

Sheikh Ahmad Kutty, a respected Islamic scholar, highlights that not all sins stem from Satanic whispers; rather, individuals may be driven by their own evil inclinations or nafs. The Hadith of Abu Hurairah, which mentions

the chaining of devils in Ramadan, is interpreted by scholars such as Ibn Khuzaymah as a reduction in their activity rather than complete elimination. Sheikh 'Atiyah Saqr, former head of Al-Azhar Fatwa committee, reconciles the apparent contradiction between chained devils and the occurrence of sin during Ramadan. He explains that the devils restrained in this month are those unable to approach sincere believers who uphold the morals of fasting. Moreover, scholars offer interpretations suggesting that

while Satanic whispers may cease during Ramadan, human weaknesses and temptations remain. Some commentators suggest that the devils mentioned may refer specifically to the Jinn, leaving human devils unaffected. In essence, the Hadith does not negate the reality of sin during Ramadan but rather sheds light on the complexity of human nature and the spiritual battles individuals face. It emphasizes the need for a nuanced understanding of religious texts to avoid confusion and deepen one's faith. ■

The Path to Eternal Success: Understanding the Test for a Successful Hereafter in Islam

In Islam, the test to pass in the hereafter for a successful eternal life, as stated by Allah, is grounded in the teachings of the Quran and the Hadith (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him). According to Islamic beliefs, this life is a temporary journey, and the ultimate goal is to attain success in the afterlife, which is eternal and everlasting.

The primary criteria for success in the hereafter are outlined in Islam as follows:

1. Faith (Iman): Belief in the Oneness of Allah (Tawheed) is the cornerstone of Islamic faith. Muslims believe in the absolute unity of God, His Prophets, His Books, His Angels, the Day of Judgment, and divine predestination. Sincere belief in these fundamental principles is essential for success in the hereafter.

2. Righteous Deeds (Amal Salih): Alongside faith, righteous actions play a crucial role in determining one's fate in the afterlife. Muslims are encouraged to perform good deeds, such as acts of worship (prayer, fasting, charity, pilgrimage), kindness to



others, honesty, justice, and compassion. These actions reflect a person's piety and devotion to Allah and His creation.

3. Submission to the Will of Allah (Islam): Submission to the divine will of Allah is another key aspect of success in the hereafter. Muslims are taught to surrender their desires and aspirations to the commandments of Allah as outlined in the Quran and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). This includes obedience to Islamic laws and principles, striving to avoid sinful behavior, and repenting for any transgressions.

4. Accountability and Judgment: Islam emphasizes the concept of accountability in the afterlife. Muslims believe that every individual will be held to account for their actions on the Day of Judgment. Allah will judge each person based on their faith,

intentions, and deeds performed during their earthly life. Those who upheld righteousness and adhered to the teachings of Islam will be rewarded with paradise (Jannah), while those who rejected faith or engaged in sinful behavior will face consequences in hell (Jahannam).

5. Mercy and Forgiveness: Despite the emphasis on accountability, Islam also teaches the importance of Allah's mercy and forgiveness. Muslims believe in the concept of seeking repentance (Tawbah) for sins committed and turning back to Allah with sincerity and humility. Allah's mercy is vast and encompassing, and He forgives those who sincerely seek His forgiveness and strive to rectify their mistakes.

Overall, success in the hereafter in Islam is attained through a combination of faith, righteous deeds, submission to the will of Allah, accountability, and reliance on His mercy and forgiveness. Muslims strive to lead a life that aligns with the teachings of Islam, with the ultimate goal of attaining eternal bliss in the presence of Allah in the afterlife. ■

"Maximizing the Last Ten Days of Ramadan: Guidance and Suggestions"



Abdul Malik Mujahid

As the blessed month of Ramadan draws to a close, Muslims are presented with a unique opportunity to intensify their worship and draw closer to Allah. The last ten days of Ramadan hold particular significance, offering a chance for spiritual rejuvenation and forgiveness. Here are some practical suggestions on how to make the most of these precious days:

1. Take a Spiritual Break: Consider taking time off from work or other commitments to focus solely on worship and gratitude to Allah. Even a few days of vacation can provide a conducive environment for extended acts of devotion.

2. Engage in Itikaf: Follow the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) by observing Itikaf, a spiritual retreat in the mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan. Use this time for increased prayer, Quranic recitation, and reflection.

3. Special Dua': Make a heartfelt supplication during these nights, seeking forgiveness and guidance from Allah. Use the recommended dua' of Laylatul Qadr and earnestly ask for pardon and mercy.

4. Recite the Qur'an: Dedicate time to reciting and contemplating the Quran, particularly focusing on chapters or passages that resonate with you. Attend Quranic recitation classes to enhance your understanding and implementation of its teachings.

5. Seek Forgiveness: Take advantage of the opportunity for sincere repentance and seeking forgiveness from Allah. Reflect

on your actions, evaluate your spiritual journey, and resolve to make positive changes.

6. Wake Up for Tahajjud: Wake up in the last third of the night to pray Tahajjud and engage in deep supplication. This is a blessed time when Allah descends to the lowest heaven, ready to answer the prayers of His servants.

7. Share Iftar with Family: Spend quality time with your family during Iftar, cherishing the moments of communal breaking of the fast. Use this time to strengthen familial bonds and foster a spirit of unity and love.

8. Attend Taraweeh with Family: Make an effort to attend Taraweeh prayers with your family, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to benefit from the collective worship and spiritual atmosphere of the mosque.

9. Participate in Dua' after Quran Completion : Attend Taraweeh prayers on the night when the recitation of the Quran is completed, and join in the special dua' offered at the conclusion of this momentous event.

10. Read about the Prophet: Take the opportunity to learn more about the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). Reading a biography or book on his character can inspire and motivate you to emulate his noble example.

These suggestions serve as a roadmap for maximizing the spiritual benefits of the last ten days of Ramadan. May Allah accept our efforts and grant us forgiveness, guidance, and blessings in abundance. Ameen. ■

Shaker Sayyed

Unity Amidst Diversity: Reflections on Ramadan Practices

Every year, Muslim communities around the world commence and conclude the month of Ramadan with a lingering taste of discord, stemming from disagreements over the sighting of the crescent moon. This recurring phenomenon manifests in various mosques within the same locality, each adopting different approaches to mark the beginning and end of Ramadan. Consequently, the community finds itself fragmented, with individuals aligning with disparate mosques and even within households, family members attending separate congregations. In the West, this diversity in Ramadan practices often bewilders members of the Muslim community. Questions arise, pondering why one mosque follows a certain method while

others opt for alternative approaches. Amidst these queries lies a deeper inquiry into the essence of Ramadan as a season for unity, symbolized by the sighting of the crescent moon.

However, the crux of the matter lies not in Ramadan itself nor in the crescent, but rather within the Muslim community. The underlying issue pertains to our inability to achieve consensus and unity in matters of religious observance. Yet, the solution remains within our grasp.

Muslims have the capacity to foster unity during Ramadan through concerted efforts. Firstly, communities can advocate for collaboration among local mosque leaders to adopt a unified approach based on one of the established methods for moon sighting. Should

this endeavor falter, there remains the option of electing leadership committed to achieving consensus. Ramadan, therefore, serves as a litmus test, reflecting the extent of unity within the Muslim community prior to its commencement. It is neither the harbinger nor the disruptor of unity; rather, it reveals the existing state of affairs. Like a mirror, Ramadan reflects the reality of our unity or lack thereof.

In essence, unity amidst diversity is achievable, provided the community collectively endeavors to bridge differences and forge a common path forward. Ramadan beckons us to confront this challenge and strive towards harmony, embodying the spirit of unity that defines the essence of Islam. ■

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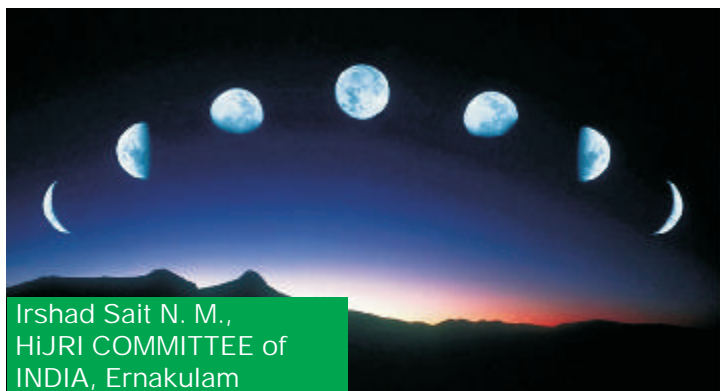
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Urgent Advisory: Start of Ramadan and Observance of Eid-ul-Fitr



Irshad Sait N. M.,
HIJRI COMMITTEE of
INDIA, Ernakulam

The beginning of Ramadan 1445 is anticipated to commence on Monday, March 11th, according to various credible sources including Saudi Arabia, Turkey, ISNA/FCNA, and the European Council (ECFR). The conjunction of Sha'baan is expected at 09:00 UTC on Sunday, March 10th, aligning with the Geo-centre in Makkah.

It is imperative to note an Annular Solar Eclipse scheduled for Monday, April 8th, 2024, occurring on the 29th day of Ramadan 1445 at 18:21 UTC. Despite this significant celestial event, there is a concern that some regions may extend Ramadan to 30 days, potentially impacting the observance of Eid-ul-Fitr.

In adherence to Sharia, a solar eclipse traditionally marks the end

of a lunar month, as emphasized by Sheik Yusuf al-Qardawi's Fatwa and Imam Shafi's observations. Imam Shafi proposed that the new month commences immediately after the conjunction/solar eclipse, suggesting a universally applicable calendar rule.

Failure to acknowledge the solar eclipse as the conclusion of Ramadan may result in millions inadvertently fasting on Eid day, Tuesday, April 9th, 2024, contrary to Islamic practice.

We urge all Muslim scholars, leaders, and authorities to ensure alignment with Sharia principles and prevent any inadvertent fasting on Eid day. Let us collectively uphold the sanctity of Ramadan and Eid-ul-Fitr for all Muslims worldwide. ■

The Meaning of Ikhlas (Sincerity)

Ikhlas, an Arabic word, conveys the idea of purifying our motives and intentions, ensuring that our actions are solely motivated by seeking the pleasure of Allah. Sincerity is the key that unlocks the heart to receive the mercy of Allah Almighty. The acceptance of one's deeds hinges on the purity of intention, which, in turn, is contingent upon the level of sincerity in one's heart.

In a general sense within Islamic literature, *ikhlas* refers to sincerity and purity of intention in worshipping Allah. Allah emphasizes this in the Quran: "(They have been ordered no more than this: To worship Allah sincerely, being true (in faith), to establish the prayer, and to give zakah. And that is the worthy religion)" (Al-Bayyinah 98: 5).

Also, "Say: 'I am but a man like yourselves but to whom it is revealed that your Lord is only One God. So whoever hopes to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and let him not associate anyone with Him in worship'" (Al-Kahf 18: 110).

In a more specific sense, *ikhlas* involves purifying motives and intentions, ensuring that actions are untainted by anything other than seeking Allah's pleasure.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him)

stated, "*Allah is Pure, and He accepts only that which is pure.*" He further emphasized, "*He accepts only that which is pure and done solely for His sake alone!*"

Imam Fudhayl ibn 'Iyad clarified *ikhlas*, stating, "*If a person abandons an act because of people, he is being ostentatious; if, on the other hand, he were to do it because of people, then that is shirk (associating partners with Allah); ikhlas, therefore, is to be free of both.*"

The Prophet (peace and blessings be upon him) cautioned against impious motives and intentions, warning, "*Whoever fights in the way of Allah while aiming only for spoils of war, he gets that and nothing else!*" He highlighted the hidden intentions, stating, "*There are many who are slain between the two battle-lines, only Allah knows their intentions!*" and "*Whoever fights in order to hold aloft the Word of Allah, he alone fights for the sake of Allah!*"

Imam Fudhayl ibn 'Iyad emphasized, "*All good deeds, in order to be acceptable in Shariah, must satisfy two essential prerequisites. First, they must be approved or sanctioned by Allah; second, they must be done with the pure intention of earning the pleasure*

of Allah."

In conclusion, *ikhlas* entails worshipping Allah and dedicating all good works wholly and entirely unto Him, seeking His pleasure. May Allah grant us all sound faith, pure hearts, and deeds that are acceptable. Ameen. ■

OBITUARY

Marnia Lazreg: Champion of Women's Rights in the Muslim World



Marnia Lazreg, a prominent scholar, and advocate for women's rights in the Muslim world passed away on January 13 at the age of 83. Her groundbreaking research focused on the struggles and aspirations of women, drawing from her experiences in French colonial Algeria. Lazreg's work challenged traditional norms, particularly critiquing Islamic coverings like head scarves. She leaves behind a legacy of academic excellence and a lasting impact on the study of women's issues in the Muslim world. ■

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The Spiritual Significance of Fasting in Ramadan

Ramadan, the sacred month in Islam, holds profound significance as it marks the time when the Quran was revealed as a guide for humanity. The teachings of this month, encapsulated in fasting, serve as a pathway towards spiritual enlightenment, self-discipline, and a deeper connection with the Divine.

Allah has ordained fasting during Ramadan as a yearly obligation, serving as a period of training for individuals to gain mastery over their external desires and to nurture a connection with their inner selves. As the pinnacle of creation, humans possess a unique faculty the heart which enables them to discern between good and evil, truth and falsehood. This innate ability, inherent in every individual, forms the basis of ethical decision-making and conscious living.

The heart, referred to as the Qalb in the Quran, serves as the seat of realization and spiritual awareness. When the soul is internally connected to the Divine spirit (Ruh), and has control over the external faculties of senses and rationality, individuals transcend

their physical existence and embody spiritual beings in human form. This state of tranquility, known as *nafs e Muthmainnah* or a sound heart (Qalb e Saleem), paves the way for entry into Paradise.

Fasting serves as a means to achieve this inner transformation. By abstaining from food, drink, and other worldly desires during daylight hours, individuals subdue their lower selves (*Nafs e Ammarah*), which incline towards sin and worldly pleasures. Instead, they submit themselves as servants of Allah, striving for purification and spiritual elevation.

However, the essence of fasting extends beyond mere abstinence. It entails a conscious effort to restrain the ego (Satan) throughout the day, ensuring that the spiritual essence of devotion and purification remains intact. Unfortunately, for many, the essence of fasting is lost as indulgence takes precedence during non-fasting hours, undermining the spiritual journey intended by this sacred practice.

The true essence of fasting lies in internal transformation and

devotion to Allah. It serves as a reminder of the transient nature of worldly pleasures and the importance of spiritual nourishment. Through fasting, individuals strive to attain Taqwa, God-consciousness, and align their actions with Divine guidance.

Ultimately, the choice to embark on the path of spiritual growth rests with each individual. The teachings of Ramadan provide a clear distinction between the path to Heaven and Hell, urging individuals to tread the path of righteousness and accountability for their actions. As believers seek guidance and mercy from Allah, they acknowledge their inherent weaknesses and strive to maintain steadfastness in their faith.

In the end, Ramadan serves as a beacon of light, guiding believers towards spiritual enlightenment, self-discipline, and eternal bliss. It is a time for introspection, purification, and a renewed commitment to living a life of righteousness and piety. May Allah bestow His mercy upon us and guide our hearts towards the truth. ■



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