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## When will it end?



**Zakaria Virk, Editor**

As of the writing of this editorial there have been 2.7 million worldwide Coronavirus cases, 180,000 deaths, while in the US 825,000 cases and 47,000 deaths mostly in New York. Meanwhile in the UK there have been 140,000 cases and 18,738 deaths.

Virologists had been warning for weeks that the Coronavirus outbreak could explode, but political leaders, particularly UK & USA did little to halt its advance. Like the virus itself, which was traced to the Chinese city of Wuhan (and leaders there denied and downplayed for weeks).

Few may have expected inspired leadership from U.S. President Trump, who dismissed the coronavirus as a Democratic “hoax” and predicted it would disappear “like a miracle.” Even so, his fumbling of a national address on the emergency, followed by his trademark blame-shifting for his government’s lack of preparedness (“I don’t take responsibility at all”), will be remembered as a lowest point in American political leadership. Now POTUS has suggested injecting disinfectants into the body as treatment and to clean lungs.

Although President Trump gets the most attention for his corona bungling, he’s hardly alone. Brazilian strongman President Jair Bolsonaro, characterized the coronavirus panic as a media-fueled “fantasy.” A day later, his press secretary tested positive.

In the UK PM Boris Johnson failed to attend five high-level emergency meetings called to prepare for the outbreak in January and February 2020. PM announced Britain’s version of a lockdown on March 23 — later than many countries in Europe. Since then, he has spent 26 days away from his duties, first sick and in self – isolation, then in a hospital ward and an intensive care unit, PM Johnson was advised not to shake hands but he

did anyway and caught the virus. After leaving hospital Boris Johnson thanked.... Jenny McGee 35, originally from New Zealand, along with Luis Pitarma 29, from Portugal, for standing by Mr. Johnson’s bedside for 12 hours at a time as his life hung in the balance. Yet he is the one who was against immigration like the man in US.

The biggest impact of this pandemic has been on religious rites and rituals. It will no longer be possible to kiss Pope’s hands, no need to gather in St Peter’s Square, no need to drink HOLY water whether it is from Vatican, Ganges, or Zamzam. Suddenly these waters don’t cure. It is no longer incumbent to gather for cherished taraweeh prayer, or congregate for Juma. It is forbidden for relatives to be pallbearer at the funeral of a relative. Like telemedicine, tele-worshipping is becoming popular. It was mandatory to stand shoulder to shoulder now worshippers stand six feet apart in the mosques. Mullahs, Rabbi’s and Pundits have become redundant. Will there ever be Eid, Hajj or Umra? It is a wakeup call for religious leaders to plan for a changed world where religion can stick to the old ways.

Coronavirus is going to bring drastic changes to Western societies and economies. Borders will no longer be open to travellers. Shortage of medical supplies will force countries to make locally. There will be strong demand for public health care. Boring and costly buildings will be thing of the past as people are easily working from homes. There will be no business travel when there is Zoom and Skype available. When it’s all over, there will be inquiry commissions looking into who did what? It’s not over till it’s over.

But when will it End?





# Why Pakistan loses its best like Dr Amer Iqbal

By Pervez Hoodbhoy

This is the story of Pakistan's most recognised mathematician and why we finally lost him

Two weeks ago Pakistan's only well-known mathematician left for the Western world. He has no plans to return. Since the country has almost no real mathematicians — a bare half a dozen or less — the loss was huge. But who cares? Preoccupied

by politics of the boot, busy gorging imported luxury products, and feverishly preparing for travel to the hereafter, our moribund culture is indifferent to math or physics. But in living and vibrant



cultures, both new and old, mathematicians and theoretical physicists are seen very differently. In millennia past, Pythagoras and Plato were cult leaders who saw in geometry the wondrous key unlocking the universe's secrets. They demanded from their students accurate definitions, clearly stated assumptions, and logical deductive proof — the very stuff that makes mathematics the queen of sciences and the mother of physics. Everything in the modern world from spacecraft and internet to pharmaceuticals and chewing gum owes itself to such rigorous mental training.

Below is a story for all who wonder why Pakistan sorely loses out in the modern world, why its universities consistently fail to keep our best and brightest, and why there's no genuine culture of learning and research. While it's about just one person, there are countless stories of others who

returned to Pakistan but eventually gave up.

Around 1994-1995, I received a handwritten letter from someone saying he was deeply interested in studying theoretical physics. It was signed by some Amer Iqbal. Filled with neatly written formulae, it seemed moderately interesting but little more. I replied, suggesting he visit.

Weeks later, a tall lad in his late teens walked into my office at Quaid-e-Azam University.

I was then teaching a subject called quantum field theory whose comprehension requires years of mathematical preparation.

The boy seemed bright but I said he wouldn't be able to follow my course. I was wrong.

He rapidly self-studied the needed background and, to my amazement, was soon picking out my occasional mistakes on the blackboard.

Delighted, I suggested MIT for a PhD. Although all its departments are extremely competitive, MIT's departments of theoretical physics and mathematics can be terrifying. Even with 100 per cent perfect GRE scores and excellent grades, overseas candidates have a hard time getting in and then surviving. Fortunately, I had colleagues on the MIT faculty with whom I had either collaborated on research or who had been on my PhD committee. After an initial hiccup it all worked out and Amer was on his way.

The rest is history. His PhD research and a series

of brilliant papers soon established Amer in high academia. MIT's Professor Jeffrey Goldstone — of Goldstone Boson fame (the Higgs Boson or so-called God Particle derives from the Goldstone Boson) — is also famously frugal for words. But in a corridor encounter about 20 years ago, he somehow strung together enough of them to gruffly bark a "thank you" at me for sending Amer to MIT.

At the next stage, Steven Weinberg — who co-shared the 1979 Nobel Prize with Abdus Salam and Sheldon Glashow — invited him for post-doctoral research at the University of Texas (Austin).

The young man was flowering. During short subsequent visits to the United States from Pakistan, he was co-authoring papers with the world's outstanding mathematicians (Okounkov, Yau, etc) and famous string-theory physicists (Vafa, Zwiebach, etc).

Only practitioners in the super stratified world of high science can understand what this really means. Amer Iqbal is still the sole Pakistani invited to lecture at high-level meetings on problems at the interface of theoretical physics and mathematics.

None of this cut much ice with his colleagues in Pakistani institutions. Six years of teaching and research at Lums (2009-2015) ended with Amer's forced resignation and unceremonious exit. Some of his peers — jealous intellectual midgets — were threatened by his academic stature and conspired against him. Lums has never explained why he was fired.

The next stint — at the Abdus Salam School for Mathematical Sciences (AS-SMS) in Lahore — lasted another five years and ended no better. Instead of a regular appointment, he was given a year-to-year contract, a situation leaving appointees vulnerable and forced to curry favour with higher ups. For Amer that was out of the question.

But it was his exposing a mega-scandal that ended everything. Readers are referred to my Dawn article, 'Our ghost mathematician', which tells

how at least Rs638 million were paid in fake salaries at AS-SMS. I began the article saying:

"To be named below are several persons who would have ended up behind bars in any country where there is rule of law. Several others — whether complicit or negligent — would be shamed, reviled and removed from their current official positions. Knowing that nothing will happen here in Pakistan, this is still a story I must tell."

That story was told and indeed nothing happened — except that Amer's contract was not renewed. One hears that HEC has launched a scam investigation. But committees are made to whitewash crimes, not to catch crooks.

Nevertheless, the truth filtered out. Days later my Dawn article was picked up by BBC. Its diligent researchers located several European 'ghost mathematicians' from 10 years ago as well as the former director of AS-SMS who ran away with the loot (of course, he denies it).

In essence this BBC report (accessible here) corroborated Amer's extraordinary 456-page investigative report. Earlier posted on the AS-SMS official website, it was removed last month. Presumably this is to protect others complicit in the heist at AS-SMS.

Pakistan's universities — all of them — are cesspools of political filth and intrigue. In a system with perverted values and nonsensical selection criteria, duffers who fail at all else become lauded university professors. Today they rule the roost. Even if Pakistan somehow attracts back its best and brightest from foreign lands, they will soon leave unless our universities can be made to respect the rule of law and operate on principles of strict merit, fair play and transparency. It is hard to see how any of these conditions can be met in the near future.

[Published in Dawn, February 1st, 2020.](#)



# Pakistan's Real 'Mafia Godfathers'

By Imad Zafar

Not long ago, elected Pakistani leaders were routinely smeared by comparing them to godfathers in the “Sicilian mafia” and the like, and accusing them of corruption without such charges being proven in a court of law. And yet today, the PTI (Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf) regime under Prime Minister Imran Khan with the backing of the military establishment is facing a serious crisis of governance and economic turmoil, while corruption is increasing instead of decreasing.

Recently a report by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) alleged that Imran Khan’s cronies Jahangir Khan Tareen, Makhdoom Khusró Bakhtiar (federal minister for food security) and Samiullah Chaudry (Punjab provincial minister for food) were responsible for creating artificial shortages of sugar and wheat and earned hundred of billions of rupees by selling these commodities at inflated prices.

The PTI-led government’s ally Pakistan Muslim League Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) was also named in the report as Chaudry Moonis Elahi, the son of Chaudry Pervaiz Elahi, Speaker of the Punjab Assembly, was also accused of making a profit. So the image created

through certain sections of the press about Prime Minister Khan being honest has been tarnished, as this report strongly suggests that he has been rewarding his cronies.

Then last Friday, Khan announced a relief packages for the construction sector, giving the sector the status of industry. At a time when the world is going through a recession due to a pandemic, and when even in Pakistan players are afraid to invest because of the uncertainty of the future in a post-Covid-19 world, providing relief to the construction industry that will eventually benefit the already-billionaire property tycoons and cement-factory owners is only a waste of time and resources.

However, with Imran Khan’s close friends like Aneel Musarrat and Abdul Aleem Khan in the property sector, it does not take rocket science to find who will benefit from this relief package. Yet at the same time, doctors fighting the coronavirus have not been provided adequate personal protective equipment (PPE), and private-school teachers, who number around 1.5 million, are facing financial distress as they have not been paid, but there is no relief package for them.





So a government that has failed miserably to provide any relief to the masses or to cope with the pandemic crisis now has been accused of allowing its cronies to benefit from an artificial wheat and sugar crisis.

Amid the growing public anger, instead of firing Khusro Bakhtiar from his ministry and immediately ordering an inquiry against him, Khan has made him minister for economic affairs instead, while Samiullah Chaudry has resigned as Punjab food minister and sugar magnate Jahangir Khan Tareen remains above the law. No one has been arrested, nor has the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) shown the same enthusiasm it has had in the past for dragging opposition members into court despite the lack of any conclusive report like this or any solid charges.

If instead of this hybrid regime a genuinely elected government were ruling the country, by now it would have been dislodged on the basis of a report like this one from the FIA on the wheat and sugar crisis, and for rewarding its cronies through relief packages, and for setting up an amnesty scheme for those who want their black money to be turned white without facing any consequences.

After all, if Imran Khan's government is marred with corruption charges, the ultimate beneficiary is the establishment, as now the weak prime minister cannot dare think about cutting defense spending. As well, Khan has been given a harsh reminder that he remains only a puppet, and this scandal is a kind of punishment for his unwillingness to go for a nationwide lockdown to slow the spread of Covid-19 despite the establishment being in favor of it. However, Khan may be able to weather the storm for now as his backers have no choice but to keep supporting him as no one in the opposition wants to come into power and take on the burden of the failures of the PTI regime.

The Covid-19 pandemic has also weakened the economies of the US and Saudi Arabia, so the

establishment will not have quick access to substantial aid or loans to prevent the economy from weakening further. So it will be hard for them to keep Khan in power if the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Washington and Riyadh are not able to bail them out again by providing hefty loans.

The writing is clearly on the wall, that no matter how much support is provided by global players, it is a dead-end street for Khan and his backers, as the global recession means no substantial economic growth for Pakistan, which will only add more miseries to the common people's lives.

The lack of popular support behind the current hybrid regime means more turmoil on the economic and political fronts, and sooner or later the establishment will have to take a back seat and sacrifice Khan on the power chessboard to save itself from being thrown out of the game. Until then, Khan and his cronies are safe, but as soon the odds change – and they are changing very quickly – this FIA report will only add to the charge sheet against the PTI regime.

It is now time for those who fall for the rhetoric of “accountability” that is meant only to undermine popularly elected leaders to realize that the real “mafia godfathers” are sitting in the current government, which is the product of a rigged political discourse engineered by the invisible forces.

It is the deep state and puppets like Imran Khan and his cronies who are mafiosi within the state and blatantly looting the exchequer of the country with the help of a greedy section of the media fooling the masses.

Imad Zafar is a journalist and columnist/commentator for newspapers. He is associated with TV channels, radio, newspapers, news agencies, and political, policy and media related think-tanks.

<https://asiatimes.com/2020/04/pakistans-real-mafia-godfathers/>



# Ramdan Anxieties

By I.A Rehman

A GREAT deal of what happens in the country in the immediate future will depend on how well or otherwise the challenges peculiar to the month of Ramazan are faced by the government and the people. The former will be tested for its ability to persevere with measures necessary to fight the coronavirus epidemic, and the latter will be required to prove their strength in preferring reason to emotion and narrow interest. And both need the will and capacity to deal effectively with the powerful pressure groups the month of fasting will throw up.

The first pressure group comprises the ulema, who took the initiative by announcing their intention to hold taraweeh prayers, Friday congregations and aitrakaf (when many people devote the last 10 days or so of Ramazan to prayers and meditation in complete silence and isolation, in mosques). Some of them have expressed their readiness to accept the precautions the authorities may prescribe to prevent the spread of Covid-19. They include Maulana Fazlur Rahman.

The president talked to the hard-line ulema and they jointly worked out a set of SOPs to prevent the spread of the virus. Under this agreement the mosques will remain open to all forms of congregations, prayers will preferably be offered in open spaces and not in halls, the namazis will stand three feet away from each other and the distance between the horizontal rows will be increased to six feet. One is not sure that this plan is adequate to ward off the contagion but even if it is, implementation throughout the country could pose problems.

But why did the religious leaders strike a pre-emptive blow at the government? It is possible some scholars genuinely believe that they have a right to hold congregations in mosques regardless of the pandemic threat. Their indifference to requisites of their own safety is



understandable though their lack of concern for the safety of the fellow namazi is not. They also had a valid argument that crowding in mosques didn't pose a greater threat of spread of disease than the mobs thronging the shops. But one can only hope that they were not exploiting the government's known predilection for religiosity to assert their autonomy in matters of religious ritual, and this in opposition to the decisions of Saudi and Egyptian authorities. It seems the last word in government's relations with the traditionalists in religious matters is yet to be written.

**For many vendors, Ramazan is the month of unbridled profiteering.**

The second pressure group that could undermine the fight against Covid-19 comprises the huge number of beneficiaries of what may be described as the Ramazan economy.

For a very large number of shopkeepers and vendors, Ramazan is the month of unbridled profiteering. They charge exorbitant prices for fruits, vegetables and other requirements for iftar. Even where raising prices is not possible, and no special bazaars are allowed this year, the demand for syrups, sugar, milk, bread and many other foodstuffs goes up in the month of fasting.

By the middle of Ramazan, Eid shopping begins. This is the best period for the tailors. At the same time, the demand for readymade garments and footwear, especially for children, soars. It is doubtful if appeals for austerity will



have an effect on a community that has shown little respect for the lockdown regime. Finally, will the city folk be prevented from joining their families in the countryside, which enables intercity road transport operators to increase their charges even for passengers on the roofs of their vehicles?

All these traditional activities and celebrations, including the iftar parties by politicians etc, are likely to be affected this year by financial constraints in the case of private-sector employees, because most of them might not be paid any wages. But there can be no way of curbing the traders' expectations of the traditional Ramazan boom and the frustration of all those who still do not understand the tyranny of a pandemic.

Two other factors will considerably increase public frustration. One is the absence of relief for small businesses. For instance, a small shop owner has no means to pay his two or three employees or there is a family that depends on the monthly rent of a shop that the tenant cannot pay. In both cases, acceptance of restrictions on business means unbearable hardship.

The second cause of public frustration is difficulty in believing that the response to the epidemic is adequate and is as expeditious as possible. More than two months after the first coronavirus cases were reported, the arrangements for testing people for infection are on a dangerously low scale, and as a result, the number of affected people given out by the authorities appears to be lower than the actual number of patients. The work of bringing Pakistanis who are stranded abroad is subject to delays and the fares charged and the cost of stay in quarantine smack of exploitation and extortion.

Regardless of the merits of the Ehsaas cash disbursement, instead of asking the recipients to come to selected places it might have been better to revive the local bodies to bring funds for deserving families to their doorstep. Further,

to offer food rations to everybody who asks for them is considered too radical to be adopted by Pakistan. The language of giving out the casualty figures needs to be improved. There may be room for appreciating an increase in the number of patients who have been cured of the disease, but to say that the number of cases is lower than feared amounts to insulting the sick and the dead. There will be cause for concern and anxiety even when the daily increase in cases of infection falls to a single digit.

It will thus be necessary to raise the level of official efficiency during Ramazan to make the slogans about staying home, maintaining social distance and frequent washing of hands effective.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1551503?ref=whatsapp>



### Is it true that Tahajjud prayer is the real Taraveeh prayer?

Yes, Tahajjud prayer is the real Taraveeh prayer.

Taraveeh prayer is the special prayer ordained for the month of Ramadan. It has to be performed each night during the month of Ramadan. It is in fact offered at Tahajjud time.

The observance of Taraveeh prayer after the Isha prayers was allowed during the Khilafat of Hazrat Umar (R.A), to enable such people, who for unavoidable reasons could not perform Taraveeh prayer at Tahajjud time (in pre-dawn hours), to still offer this prayer. However, it is preferable to offer this prayer at Tahajjud time.



# UK: Labor Party adds six new British Muslims to shadow cabinet

LONDON: The newly elected leader of Labor Party Sir Keir Starmer has added six British Pakistani parliamentarians to the new shadow cabinet.

Sir Keir Starmer, a former human rights lawyer and director of public prosecutions, has been picked as the new Labour leader by an overwhelming margin, heralding a fresh chapter in the party's history after five years under Jeremy Corbyn.

Those British Pakistani Members of Parliament (MPs) who have been given responsibilities in the shadow cabinet are Khalid Mahmood, Dr Rosens Allin Khan, Yasmeen Qureshi, Afzal Khan, Naz Shah and Imran Hussain.

All of them were part of the previous shadow cabinet too under leadership of Jeremy Corbyn but in different roles. Interestingly, none of them nominated Sir Keir Starmer for leadership. Khalid Mahmood, Yasmeen Qureshi, Afzal Khan and Naz Shah supported Emily Thornberry for leadership, while Imran Hussain vouched for Rebecca Long-Bailey to succeed Jeremy Corbyn, the outgoing party leader.

Khalid Mahmood has been appointed as new **SHADOW MINISTER FOR DEFENCE PROCUREMENT**. Khalid, who is currently the most senior member of Parliament of Muslim faith and of Pakistani origin, was first elected MP in 2001 from Birmingham-Perry

Barr, a constituency he has successfully held since then. Khalid Mahmood was appointed Shadow Minister for Europe in 2016 by Jeremy Corbyn, then Labour leader.

Upon his appointment as the new shadow minister for defence in a message on Twitter Khalid thanked Leader Keir Starmer. "I look forward to the challenge and planned work ahead. Proud to have this fantastic opportunity," said Khalid Mahmood.

Dr Rosena Allin Khan was the first MP of Pakistani origin to be included in the shadow cabinet when she was appointed shadow minister for mental health in the first wave of appointments by Keir Starmer.

She was first elected from Tooting in 2016, when the seat became vacant after local MP Sadiq

Khan became mayor of London.

In a message on Twitter, Dr Roaena Allin Khan said: "Delighted to be called by Keir Starmer earlier and to have been asked to join the shadow cabinet as the shadow minister for mental health, working with the fabulous Jonathan Ashworth (shadow health secretary). I'll be back on the NHS frontline in coming days!"

Afzal Khan, Member of Parliament from Manchester-Gorton, has also returned to the shadow cabinet but in a different role. Afzal, who was first elected MP in 2017 elections, served as shadow minister for immigration in



the last shadow cabinet.

In a message on Twitter, expressing his delight to become a shadow minister and part of Keir Starmer's new team, Afzal said: "I look forward to working with Valerie Vaz (shadow leader of the House) at this crucial time as we consider how Parliament can adjust its working practices in light of coronavirus."

Responding to a question about his new role and responsibilities, Afzal Khan said: "In essence, the role is to deal with all the business in the Parliament. It is a good place to understand everything that government is doing and opportunity to do good networking with government ministers and shadow ministers."

Naz Shah, the MP for Bradford West since 2015,

who has served as shadow minister for women and equalities in the last shadow cabinet, has been appointed now as shadow minister for community cohesion by Keir Starmer.

In a message, Imran Hussain thanked leader Keir Starmer and said: "Employment rights are the very heart of the labour movement, and I'm looking forward to working with Andy McDonald (shadow secretary), our trade unions and others to deliver protections fit for the 21st century." Bolton South-East MP Yasmin Qureshi has also been included in the shadow cabinet by Keir Starmer.

<http://paktribune.com/news-details/labour-party-added-six-british-pakistani-to-new-shadow-cabinet>



## Pakistan: caves in Margalla Hills offer 2,400-year-old relics

ISLAMABAD-The scenic Margalla Hills hidethe gem of archeological master piece of Shah Allah Ditta caves preserving around 2400 years old Bhuddist era murals.

The ancient caves depict one of the nestling places of Buddhism in the region that are located in sector E-11 of the federal capital.

Shah Allah Ditta caves have various engravings of Buddha on its wall that are extremely pleasing and appealing,an official told APP. He said that interestingly, relics of the Buddhist era dating back to the 8th century can be found here.

After a meticulous observation of the site, it could be seen as the archaeological evidence indicates that the caves and the platform-like formations surrounding the area were first used for meditation by Buddhist monks and later by Hindu sadhus before Muslim ascetics took over during the Mughal period,he said.

He informed that Shah Allah Ditta caves have remained the center of attraction in different epochs of rising religions in the sub-continent.

These caves also have religious significance for local people because the devotees visit this place quite often. There were omens of burning "diyas" on walls of the cave and many amulets or "taveez"



were also tied around the roots of Banyan trees..

The village is believed to be more than seven hundred years old and was used as route from Kabul to the Gandharan city of Taxila by Alexander The Great and Sher Shah Suri while Mughal rulers and other emperors often passed through while traveling from Afghanistan to the Hindustan.

He said that that a large number of local tourists as well as foreigners regularly visit the Shah Allah Ditta caves.

<https://nation.com.pk/20-Apr-2020/shah-allah-ditta-caves-in-margalla-hills-offer-2-400-year-old-relics>



# Christianity Has Been Handling Epidemics for 2000 Years

By Lyman Stone

And in the United Kingdom, some conservative Muslim scholars also resisted the closure of mosques. A March 17 fatwa signed by three of them made the case by reminding “the Prophet’s practice of rushing to the Masjid [mosque] during calamities,” with a total disregard for the specific kind of a calamity that coronavirus is. They also made a grim argument: “The protection of faith supersedes the protection of one’s self.” Luckily, other scholars gave counter-fatwas, reminding that Islam never commands that people “place their lives in danger” just for the sake of prayer—but some damage may have already been done.

The religious figures who are failing the coronavirus test come from diverse traditions, but they have something in common: They prioritize their subjective interpretation of faith over the objective requirements of science and reason.

The religious figures who are failing the coronavirus test come from diverse traditions, but they have something in common: They prioritize their subjective interpretation of faith over the objective requirements of science and reason.

They believe that, even if there is really something dangerous happening, God will somehow protect them thanks to their piety. A typical line of thought is that “praying to God is our only way out of this ordeal,” as one Arabic teacher in Egypt said. Or they believe God “is our shield,” as an ultra-Orthodox Jew in Brooklyn asserted. This is akin to jumping from a flying plane, without a parachute, saying, “God is our parachute.” It is the kind of blind faith that prominent atheists such as Richard Dawkins or Sam Harris have long been

criticizing.

Blind faith gets even uglier when it begins embracing divine conspiracy theories—the idea that God is using this pandemic to punish a certain group of people, which are typically the people the divine conspiracy theorists don’t like: gay people and environmentalists, according to an American evangelical minister; those who pursue “adultery and anal sex, “,” according to a Turkish conservative; the Chinese, as some Muslim clerics initially suggested; the Jews, as an anti-Semitic Florida pastor claimed, or Western countries, as an imam in Gaza asserted. The very fact some of these bigoted figures themselves catch the virus hints that there is not a di

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/08/thou-shalt-practice-social-distancing/>



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# Climate change: Blue skies pushed Greenland 'into the red'



While high temperatures were critical to the melting seen in Greenland last year, scientists say that clear blue skies also played a key role.

In a study, they found that a record number of cloud free days saw more sunlight hit the surface while snowfall was also reduced.

These conditions were due to wobbles in the fast moving jet stream air current that also trapped heat over Europe.

As a result, Greenland's ice sheet lost an estimated 600 billion tonnes.

Current climate models don't include the impact of the wandering jet stream say the authors, and may be underestimating the impact of warming.

In recent weeks, an analysis of last year's melting said the 600 billion tonnes of ice added 2.2mm to global sea levels in just two months.

This new study says that while rising global temperatures played a role in the events last year, changes in atmospheric circulation

patterns were also to blame.

Researchers found that high pressure weather conditions prevailed over Greenland for record amounts of time.

They believe this is connected to what's termed the "waviness" in the jet stream, the giant current of air that mostly flows from west to east around the globe.

As the current becomes more wobbly, it bends north, and high pressure systems that would normally move through in a few days become "blocked" over Greenland.

These systems had different impacts depending on the part of Greenland you were in.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/science-environment-52286165>





# How Charles and Camilla defiance left lasting impression on William



Royal author Penny Junor, in her 2017 book “The Duchess”, explains: “The Queen had wanted [Camilla] gone. [Charles] made it perfectly clear to anyone who would listen that Camilla was a non-negotiable part of his life.”

In his 2006 book “William’s Princess”, veteran royal author Robert Jobson argues that, during this time, Prince William was sensitive to how his father and stepmother were perceived – and learned from Charles’ tenacity.

Mr Jobson writes: “Charles’ apparent need for there to be a public acceptance of Camilla placed the identity of the Prince of Wales’ consort firmly in the public spotlight, inviting the press to take notes but strictly on Palace terms.

“Where Prime Minister Baldwin had simply insisted that no public would tolerate Wallis Simpson on the throne, Prince Charles set out to convert a nation to his will through spin.

“Breaking the mould when it comes to matters of the heart, and struggling to find a comfortable co-existence with the press are traits Charles would pass on to his son.

“After all, Prince William is an impressionable and intuitive young man who has always taken keen interest in the press coverage of his parents’ divorce and affairs.

“He was there to witness the story unfolding on both sides, seeing what made it into the newspapers and onto the

screens, knowing what was really going on behind closed doors and, to some extent, gaining an insight into how events were presented by [Charles’ Press Secretary] Mark Bolland.

“It would make a lasting impression on the young prince, as witnessed later on in his own attempts to lead the press a merry dance when it came to his private life – particularly in his blossoming and deepening relationship with Kate.”

The author points towards William’s famous words in 2005 as an instance of the prince hiding his true feelings for his future bride from the world’s media.

When on a skiing holiday with his family and the then-Miss Middleton, William appeared to rubbish any thoughts of marriage, saying: “Look, I’m only 22 for God’s sake.”

However Mr Jobson writes: “William is no fool.

“The denial of any serious thoughts of marriage blurted out so apparently carelessly was, in fact, a smokescreen designed to cool the media frenzy about William’s steady girlfriend.

“It was for show; a way of dampening down speculation about him and Kate; a way of protecting her from the press.”

Express.co.uk

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/royal/1268736/royal-news-prince-william-prince-charles-camilla-parker-bowles-palace-spt>

## Camilla and Charles: a romantic timeline

Early 1970s	Charles and Camilla begin their romantic relationship	
1973	Camilla breaks things off to marry Andrew Parker Bowles	
1978/9	They resume their relationship	
1981	They break off their liaison when Charles becomes engaged to Lady Diana Spencer	
1986	Charles later admits this was when he resumed his affair with Camilla	
1995	Camilla and Andrew Parker Bowles divorce	
1996	Charles and Diana divorce	
1999	Camilla and Charles are pictured together for the first time in public	
2005	Their royal wedding at Windsor Guildhall	





# France: French Muslim Star Takes Off Her Hijab — Here's Why

For those familiar with Ibtissem's auditions or her music, you know that her staple identity is her wearing a hijab, or a religious head covering worn by some Muslim women. As of late Mennel is no longer wearing her hijab, and is letting her long brown locks flow.

Many fans in the comments, both in French and in Arabic are asking – why? Mennel didn't yet directly respond to the question but she wrote a lengthy caption thanking her fans for supporting her values and music on her most recent picture. The closest that she came to an explanation for her recent change in appearance is this part:

“I will never lower myself to the level that is not mine. And I keep that smile, the one who tells you “I am proud to be who I am and if that is not enough, then I have nothing else to offer” I am happy to be who I am and I share with my community, my “mennies” all the love that I have in me. I am 100% authentic and I intend to remain so. Thank you to those who appreciate my music and my person for his true values. To you, know that my story is Traced in the light of my inspiration.

And my inspiration is you. It is the love, sincerity, and kindness of those who feel connected to me, to this musical universe which encompasses our sorrows and our joys, our hopes, and our glories. One day I was told: walk straight and don't turn around. So I take one step, then two, and I courageously move forward with an open heart and a free spirit.

She emphasized how social media is only a small part of life and that she appreciates the loving comments she gets but knows that the negative comments are not to be taken too seriously.

She also posted a cover of “Slow Dancing In A Burning Room” by John Mayer where she is seen without a head covering on and stated in the caption that she is currently working on her second album. The video has garnered over 77,000 views.

A Look Back At Mennel's 'AGT' Audition and Editing Controversy Ibtissem's AGT audition was



featured in a short montage where it seemed like she struggled through her song. Simon Cowell offered her water and suggested she sing another song. The editing made it seem like she did not make it

through to the next round. She took to social media to set the record straight and revealed that she did, in fact, make it to the next round. She quit the show because of this editing decision. In her audition, she is wearing a hijab.

It is clear that this faulty editing did not get her down. She has a loyal fanbase that has stuck by her and supported her music since her appearance on the show. She has 386,000 subscribers on Youtube and posts well-received covers. In the comments, fans mention that she is beautiful with or without her hijab. They recognize that it is her decision whether or not she wants to wear it and will support her regardless.

<https://talentrecap.com/agt-contestant-mennel-ibtissem-takes-off-her-hijab/>



# USA: Muslim groups join forces to raise \$500,000 for coronavirus relief grants

By Aysha Khan

A Muslim-led crowd-funding campaign has raised nearly \$500,000 to offer micro-grants to low-income American families whose livelihoods have been hurt by the outbreak of the novel coronavirus.

Facing a “tsunami” of requests for aid, the coronavirus relief campaign has already sent assistance checks of between \$250 to \$1,000 to more than 660 households across the country, benefitting about 2,100 individuals of all and no faiths.

The initiative, which began March 14 on the Muslim crowd funding platform LaunchGood, was organized by Islamic educational non-profit CelebrateMercy, relief organization Penny Appeal USA and the Islamic Center at New York University.

“We want the country to know that we are a vital organ to society, even though often Muslims are being portrayed as somewhat of a tumor to society,” said Tarek El-Messidi, director of CelebrateMercy, a non-profit that teaches about the Prophet Muhammad’s life and is known for fundraisers benefitting vandalized Jewish cemeteries,

“The Prophet Mohammed said the most beloved people to God are those who benefit others most,” El-Messidi explained. “Knowing that so many millions were going to lose jobs, to struggle to make ends meet, to pay rent, to pay bills, to pay for child care, we felt it was an immediate need and we wanted to help alleviate it for as many people as possible.”

By mid-April, White House officials say, most American adults will receive a \$1,200 payment from the U.S. government as part of its \$2.2 trillion economic relief plan.

But layoffs, furloughs, closing businesses and positive COVID-19 tests have already wreaked havoc on Americans’ abilities to keep their homes and put food on their tables.

In the past two weeks, nearly 10 million people filed for unemployment benefits, overwhelming states’ employment systems.

With that assistance still weeks away, organizers of the LaunchGood fund rushed to mail checks to applicants — prioritized based on a need-based point system — within days of receiving their requests.

“I’ve tried every resource out there, and this is the only outlet I’ve received any kind of response from,” one grant recipient named Jason said, per a statement from the campaign. “Even the unemployment office hasn’t gotten back to me ... when I saw your email this morning, I finally was able to take a long needed deep breath.”

The campaign originally asked for \$20,000, but after donors raised over \$75,000 within a day, organizers began pushing the ceiling.

Still, El-Messidi said, if they were surprised by the donations — coming from over 3,700 individual donors so far — they have been completely overwhelmed by the “shocking” need for aid.

<https://religionnews.com/2020/04/03/muslim-groups-join-forces-to-raise-500000-for-coronavirus-relief/>



# What Faith Looks Like in the time Coronavirus

By Zak Crain PUBLISHED IN FRONTBURNER



We caught up with Imam Qamar again to talk about how he's handling the current pandemic. Suleiman—the resident scholar of the Valley Ranch Islamic Center in Irving, founder and president of the Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research in Las Colinas, and professor of Islamic studies at SMU—sounded exhausted when he picked up the phone, but seemed to gain strength through the rest of the conversation., lightly edited for clarity, follows. I'll have more of these in the coming weeks. How's it going with you? It's good. Just nonstop. I think everyone's in the same situation. It's been interesting. I'm just trying to help people stay optimistic. It's hard, though. It's hard to validate people's pain, but at the same time, you know, trying to help them see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's a tough time to sort of adjust our pastoral capacity or put it to the test, you know?

Just the amount of stuff you have to take in now with something like this happening, on top of everything else. Yeah. So I'm worried about my dad. I mean, I think that's the main thing. I think everyone's worried about their own elderly folks, more than anything else. My dad's 77, moved to Dallas last year, he lives down the street. So trying to keep him safe and protected, as much as possible.

Of course. So balancing that with everything else is something else. But, all things considered, we're doing a lot better than the vast majority of people. So just grateful and trying to do as much as we can for everybody else.

How have you seen things change with, you know, having to keep a distance from the people who worship alongside you—or you used to, at least in the past weeks? How's it different to do what you do with not being able to be around people? Yeah, it's obviously—I mean, I think like with everyone else, it's tough. It's particularly difficult because for the elderly that were coming to the mosque on a daily basis, the mosque was also their only social outlet.

Yeah. So we have to think about how to do more than just send out texts. In my case, I'm doing my three webinars a day, you know, but I realize I need to just actually schedule every day, just call five people, FaceTime them, or try to do some kind of Zoom or Skype or whatever it is just to, just to give them

some level of social comfort, you know?

To find some kind of normalcy. So that's been the main thing. It's been really on the minds of every Muslim here is what's going to happen with Ramadan? It's exactly a month away.

Oh, right. I didn't even think about that. Ramadan is what the whole year is about.

Of course. I think that for us, that's been what's occupying the minds of people is, you know, what Ramadan is going to be like. What I anticipate is that as more people actually start to feel the pain of this thing beyond just being quarantined, you know, as we have more deaths in the community, which is inevitable, that's where the focus will shift. So right now it's more about the loss of spiritual privileges, less about the amount of spiritual pain that people are feeling. Once this really settles in and I think we see the full consequences of this virus, that's when I think it's going to hit the community harder.

You said you're doing three webinars a day. What are you doing in those? I'll do like a nightly reflection. I log on every night at 8 o'clock. I'm recording a bunch of different talks and series to be used for Ramadan. I do a Friday sermon online, but it's not the actual replacement of the Friday sermon. It's just to give people that connection on Friday that they typically would have had with a sermon. And, you know, I'm just trying to make myself available to all the different organizations that are out there.

A sort of virtual Ramadan. I've been just trying to make myself available to all those organizations. Like I said, I'm considering the 8 o'clock reflection at night one of the webinars, but it's not really a webinar. It's more just like a Facebook Live. And



I'll do—like, I did two webinars today for two different organizations. On top of that, I'm just making a point to call five people a day, you know, and just check up on random people in the community. And I'm also trying to, you know, work with some of these charity organizations that rely on Ramadan for their annual funding are doing incredible work and community right now. And it would be the worst time to lose them.

And then there's ICNA Relief—Islamic Circles North America—which operates 36 food pantries around the country, and they operate one here in Dallas. And what's great about them is that they just do sweeps of neighborhoods. So they go through different neighborhoods of Dallas every day. Check up on the elderly with focus on some of the lower-income neighborhoods, you know, and just deliver aid packages. So I've been trying to support them, as much as I can.

And then lastly, we've been doing a weekly—I shouldn't say we've been doing; we just started this past Sunday—what's going to be sort of a weekly sit down, about the state of faith in Dallas. This last Sunday we talked about hunger and food insecurity. I think this next Sunday we're going to talk about fear. So it's sort of how all of our communities are uniquely impacted by this and then what, what our communities are doing to contribute to the solution. And then how the listeners can also be a part of those efforts. That's something we intend to keep on doing.

I guess it's really valuable is that you've already, you know, had those pretty strong connections with all the different faith leaders they've built over the last few years. Yeah. And you know what I'm afraid of? What I'm afraid of is that because every community is sorta hunkering down with its own right now, I'm afraid that we're actually going to lose some of that interfaith cooperation, a spirit that we've had, over the last few years.

Really? So I what I told my wife on Sunday. I was like, all right, I'm going to church. You know, we laugh about all the time because she's like, you go to church more than you go to the mosque. Because you know, that's, that's just what we've had, right? Is going to churches, going to synagogues. We've been deeply involved in each other's communities. Yeah, that makes sense. And that could really fracture. Not it would cause it not to love each other

anymore, but it's just become so regular now, that our communities work together. It would be hard, as we're recovering in our own unique ways, to reestablish those connections.

Is there a particular, you know, passage or verse that you've found yourself turning to a bit more over this past week, two weeks? There have been a few. But the one that I keep on—I have it right in front of me. So it's actually from the story of the prophet Joseph in the Quran, when he talks about verily God will place with every hardship ease. And so I think that that's just the idea that in, you know, in Islam—there are two verses.

So to actually seek to be people's ease in these moments. Something that's been sitting with me—and I was, like, we constantly worry about our own prayers being answered and we don't think enough about being the answer to someone else's prayer. And like when you call someone who has been neglected, who's alone, who's afraid, and it's just as simple as FaceTiming them and like, Hey, just wanted to check up on you, how you doing? And make a lighthearted joke and like, you can see like that person needed that.

So to be the reason that someone else smiles in these hard times is very special. And I actually did my nightly reflection, I believe three nights ago, was on that. That the prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him, said a smile in the face of your brother is a charity. And what I talked about was what's a greater charity than smiling in the face of your brother is giving your brother reason to smile. The prophet Muhammad said that the most beloved of actions to God is that you bring joy to the heart of your brother, or that you feed him a loaf of bread, or that you do away with one of the debts. So in that order, you know, eating a loaf bread or doing away with the debt, you know, that's very easily quantifiable. But the first action that he said requires no money at all. It's to make someone smile.

It doesn't take much. To actually bring joy to someone's heart that would cause them to smile. So I keep on thinking about that and just how much people need it right now.

<https://www.dmagazine.com/frontburner/2020/04/what-faith-looks-like-now-a-conversation-with-the-imam-omar-suleiman/>



# Canada: Edmonton woman 'committed' to ISIS 'facilitated extremist activities

Global News



It was also revealed a year earlier that dozens of jihadis were walking free in Canada, yet authorities won't charge them.

An Edmonton woman has been identified by intelligence officials as an alleged ISIS supporter and Al Shabaab member and who recruited a young Canadian to travel to Syria, Global News has learned.

Top Secret documents publicly disclosed in court, and obtained by Global News, also allege that Ayan Jama, 31, “has indicated a desire to attain martyrdom.” Instructions on how to build a bomb were found on her computer, according to the documents, which also allege she is “committed” to ISIS and “was/is a senior member” of Al Shabaab, the Somali terrorist group.

“She has participated in the recruitment and radicalization of a Canadian, whose eventual travel overseas to Syria was encouraged and partially financed by her,” according to the documents.

Her husband, Mohamed Sakr, was a “senior figure” in Al Shabaab (AS). He was stripped of British citizenship by U.K. authorities and killed in a 2012 drone strike. Despite the government’s allegations, Jama has not been charged with any terrorism offences. Her lawyer declined to comment, but the documents indicate she has denied any involvement in terrorism.

She continues to live in Edmonton but two sources said she had remarried and was working to turn her life around. The explosive allegations identify Jama as a returnee — someone who has come back to Canada after having participated in terrorist activities overseas.

The government says there are currently about 60 such people in the country. Few have faced

charges. Internal government files have described the challenges of prosecuting them due to the difficulty of proving what they did outside Canada.

Concerns about Jama’s alleged past are detailed in government documents filed in a highly-secretive case before the Federal Court that centres on her attempt to renew her Canadian passport.

According to the documents, after visiting the Edmonton passport office Jama was informed she was being refused a new passport “to prevent the commission of a terrorist offence.”

She was also banned from possessing a passport for four years. The decision followed a Canadian Security Intelligence Service investigation into her alleged “threat-related activities.” Senior officials at CSIS, the RCMP and Public Safety Canada had recommended the commencement of refusal proceedings.

“Jama has a well-established association and support for AS, an organization which has made threats against targets in the United States of America, the United Kingdom, France, Canada (including the West Edmonton Mall in Alberta),” according to the Top Secret report.

Born in the Somali capital Mogadishu, Jama is a 31-year-old Canadian citizen who left Toronto in May 2010 and made her way to Mogadishu, according to a summary of the classified information. She married Sakr and they lived in a region controlled by Al Shabaab, which has carried out scores of terrorist attacks in an attempt to impose its extremist version of Islamic law in the East African country. It has killed several Canadians. Sakr was a childhood friend of Mohammed Enzawi, a British extremist known as Jihadi John who appeared in ISIS execution videos.

“However, Ms. Jama claimed that neither she nor her husband were involved with AS,” according to the court file, which was heavily redacted prior to being publicly released.

<https://globalnews.ca/news/6761521/edmonton-woman-alleged-isis-recruiter/>



# Will We Flunk Pandemic Economics

By Paul Grugman, Nobel Prize winner in Economics

Just a month ago Donald Trump was still insisting that Covid-19 was a trivial issue, comparing it to the “common flu.” And he dismissed economic concerns; after all, during flu season, “nothing is shut down, life & the economy go on.”

But pandemics come at you fast. Since Trump’s blithe dismissal, something like 15 million Americans have lost their jobs — the economic implosion is happening so quickly that official statistics can’t keep up.

In our last economic crisis the economy shrank around 6 percent relative to its long-run trend,

and the unemployment rate rose around five percentage points. At a guess, we’re now looking at a slump three to five times that deep.



And this plunge isn’t just quantitatively off the charts; it’s qualitatively different from anything we’ve seen before. Normal recessions happen when people choose to cut spending, with the unintended consequence of destroying jobs. So far this slump mainly reflects the deliberate, necessary shutdown of activities that increase the rate of infection.

As I’ve been saying, it’s the economic equivalent of a medically induced coma, in which some brain functions are temporarily shut down to give the patient a chance to heal.

While a deep slump is unavoidable, however, good policies could do a lot to minimize the amount of hardship Americans experience. The problem is that the U.S. political landscape has long been dominated by an anti-government

ideology that left us unprepared, intellectually and institutionally, for this crisis.

What should we be doing? Serious economists have already reached a rough consensus over the appropriate policy response to a pandemic. The bottom line is that this isn’t a conventional recession, which calls for broad-based economic stimulus. The immediate mission, beyond an all-out effort to contain the pandemic itself, should instead be disaster relief: generous aid to those suffering a sudden loss of income as a result of the economy’s lockdown.

It’s true that we could suffer a second round of

job losses if the victims of the lockdown slash spending on other goods and services. But adequate disaster relief would address this problem, too, helping to

sustain demand.

So it’s all about helping the economic victims of the coronavirus lockdown. How are we doing?

The good news is that thanks to Democratic pressure, the CARES Act, the \$2 trillion not-a-stimulus bill that became law less than three weeks after Trump dismissed the notion that Covid-19 might pose an economic problem, is mostly focused on the right things. The core provisions of the legislation are aid to hospitals, the unemployed and small businesses that maintain their payrolls; these are exactly the kinds of things we should be doing.

What’s especially remarkable is that we got mostly sensible legislation even though the president was talking nonsense, pushing for — what else? — tax cuts as the solution for the



economy's problems. Actually, I can't think of any other recent example in which Republicans agreed to major fiscal legislation that mainly involved spending to benefit the needy, without any tax cuts for the rich.

The bad news comes in two parts.

First, the bill falls far short of what's needed on one crucial dimension: aid to state governments, which are on the front line of dealing with the pandemic. Unlike the federal government, states have to balance their budgets each year. Now they're facing a surge in costs and huge revenue losses; unless they get a lot more aid, they'll be forced to cut spending sharply, which will directly undermine essential services and indirectly deepen the overall slump.

And it's not clear when or whether that hole will be filled. Senate Republicans are hostile to the idea of another rescue package; White House officials are reportedly still talking about tax cuts.

Second, decades of hostility to government have left us poorly positioned to deliver even the aid Congress has voted. State unemployment offices have been underfunded for a long time, and red states have deliberately made it hard to apply for benefits. So the surge in unemployment is overwhelming the benefits system; Congress may have voted disaster relief, but the money isn't flowing.

The loan program for small businesses is also, by all accounts, off to a shambolic start. And those \$1,200 checks everyone is supposed to get? Many Americans won't get them for weeks or months.

It doesn't have to be like this. Canada has already set up a special web portal and phone system to provide emergency unemployment benefits. Germans have been pleasantly surprised by how quickly aid is flowing to the self-employed and small businesses.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/06/opinion/coronavirus-economy.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>



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**MOHIUDDIN ABBASI**  
Editor-in-chief

# Pakistan first to get G4 rank in South Asia

By Kalbe Ali



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has been ranked as a 4th Generation Regulator (G4) by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), becoming the only country in South Asia to have achieved the status.

Out of the 38 economies in Asia-Pacific, only eight per cent states have managed to achieve G4 status.

In the ITU report titled “Global ICT Regulatory Outlook 2020 (GIRO)”, Pakistan scored 88 out of 100. This means that Pakistan’s ICT regulations are led by economic and social policy goals. Pakistan is also among the top five regulators in the entire Asia-Pacific region with a global rank of 48.

The GIRO is built on data provided by 193 countries, which forms the basis of ‘ICT Regulatory Tracker’. The tracker, developed by ITU, is an evidence-based tool that helps decision-makers and regulators monitor the rapid evolution of ICT regulation.

The report further said that Pakistan had scored full marks (20/20) for regulatory authority, 19/22 for regulatory mandate, 22/30 for regulatory regime and 27/28 for competition framework. Pakistan’s journey towards collaborative regulation has also been highlighted as a special feature in the report.

Meanwhile, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has said that it would continue

to achieve new international benchmarks by showing its commitment to protect consumer interests and enhance public-private collaborations for the digital transformation and socio-economic benefit of Pakistan.

In another development, the PTA has extended the deadline for blocking of IMEI to additional 30 days for all GSMA valid devices and IMEIs seen on mobile networks but currently not registered with the PTA.

The decision to extend the deadline for blocking of unregistered mobile sets under Device Identification Registration and Blocking System (DIRBS) has been taken to give relief and facilitate the public and ensure social distancing during this time.

The blocking of such mobile devices will continue from May 19 and will be communicated via SMS.

All mobile devices being connected to local networks using local SIM are subject to registration within 60 days from the first use of devices on local mobile networks. However, due to extraordinary circumstances, blocking of non-registered device IMEIs, which were to be blocked between March 18 and May 18, will now start from May 19.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1551770/pakistan-first-to-get-g4-rank-in-south-asia>





# India's 'Covid-19 super-spreader' Tablighi Jamaat ' has links to jihad terror

By Radhika Singh

Tablighi Jamaat has been making headlines after becoming known as the super-spreaders of the novel coronavirus across South Asian countries, India in particular, where they held a gigantic religious congregation, despite the government-sanctioned lockdown. If mingling with thousands of Indians and transmitting the virus in a country of 1.4 billion people was not enough, Jamaat members and their accomplices have resorted to pelting with stones the police officials who came to quarantine them and the medical officials who tried to treat them. They also harassed female medical staff by marching naked in front of them in hospitals. Despite these actions, their apologists race to defend them, because the Muslims can never be wrong. However, this is not the first time India is reeling under the threat of the Islamic radicals of Tablighi Jamaat. In February 2002, the Muslim

extremists who torched the Sabarmati Express in Godhra, burning 57 Hindu devotees to death, are also suspected to have been members of this Jamaat.

Though little known, the Tablighi Jamaat is far from being an innocuous socio-cultural organization, as liberal media would like you to believe. It is an India-based radical Islamist hydra with multiple heads, and has its tentacles spread worldwide, with corroborated connections to violence, vandalism, terrorists and terror activities across the globe.

The movement, which operates out of 150 countries, boasts between 50 million and 150 million adherents. An offshoot of the fundamentalist Deobandi movement, the Jamaat believes Islam must have hegemony over all other faiths, and is out to establish the rule of Islam globally, albeit stealthily.

British terrorist Richard Reid, who attempted to detonate a shoe bomb on American Airlines flight 63 en route from Paris to Milan in 2001, had converted to Islam while being imprisoned for petty crimes, and was a follower of this fanatic movement. Tablighi Jamaat's name also surfaced during the investigations of the July 2005 London Underground bombings, the plotting of bombing flights en route to the United States from London in 2006, and the attempted bombings of London and Glasgow in July 2007.

Wikileaks reveals that the Al-Qaeda 9/11 plotters spent some days at the Nizamuddin facility of the Jamaat in Delhi, India. Jose Padilla, also known as Abdullah al-Muhajir, who was convicted of plotting radiological bombs and sentenced to 21 years in prison in the US, flaunts links to the Tablighi Jamaat. Also, the Washington D.C-born John Walker Lindh, who converted to Sunni Islam and became a Taliban





supporter, and is convicted of participating in conspiracies to murdering U.S nationals and providing material support to terrorist organizations, has links to the Jamaat.

According to FBI estimates, close to 50,000 people are associated with the Jamaat's mission in the United States. Tablighi mosques operate in major states, including Texas, California, and New York, and the Al-Falah Mosque at Queens, New York is apparently their North American headquarters.

Around 80% per cent of the Islamist radicals in France are connected to the Tablighi Jamaat through miscellaneous links, and it acts "as a as nursery for indoctrinating Islamist terrorists," according to Dr Farhan Zahid, a Pakistani counter-terrorism expert, in his analysis "Tablighi Jamaat and its links with terrorism." Many of the Jamaatis have overlapping membership with other jihadist associations also. The French Muslim recruits of the Jamaat were found to have played a large role in planning the attacks by the Portland Seven and the Lackawanna Six in the US.

Back in 2008, after a series of raids conducted on a mosque, a prayer hall and several residential buildings in Barcelona, Spanish police seized explosives and arrested 14 men who were plotting bomb attacks throughout the city. All these detainees were Islamists from Pakistan, India and Bangladesh, and all were members of the Tablighi Jamaat.

The 22-year-old Youssef Zaghba, the youngest of the London Bridge attackers of 2017, had attended meetings of Tablighi Jamaat as a student in Morocco before migrating to the UK.

British terrorists Mohammed Sidique Khan and Shehzad Tanweer, who led the 7/7 bomb attacks claiming 55 lives in London, would frequent the Jamaat's mosque in Yorkshire. The roots of Tablighi Jamaat run deep in the United Kingdom due to the thriving presence of South Asian Muslims in the country. The Markazi Mosque in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire, is run by the Tablighis, and is designated as the Jamaat's

European headquarters.

At face value, it may appear to be a harmless egalitarian organization, but in the deeper scheme of things, the Tablighi Jamaat urges liberal or moderate Muslims to examine their own life choices, and demands that they return to orthodox Islam. These members are then prepared to execute radical operations.

### COVID 19

Tablighi Jamaat held the religious congregational program in Nizamuddin West, Delhi. There was an Ijtema (congregation) in every week of March till March 21. 2020

At least 24 of the attendees had tested positive for the virus among the 300 who showed symptoms by 31 March 2020. It is believed that the sources of infection were preachers from Indonesia. Many had returned to their states and also provided refuge to foreign speakers without the knowledge of local governments. Eventually started local transmissions especially in Tamil Nadu, Telengana, Karnataka, Jammu and Kashmir and Assam. The entire The entire Nizamuddin West area has been cordoned off by the Police as of 30 March, and medical camps have been set up. After evacuation from the markaz, of the scores of jamaat attendees, 167 of them were quarantined in a railway facility in south east Delhi amid concerns over their safety and transmission of the virus.

The Tablighi Jamaat gathering emerged as one of India's major coronavirus hotspots in India, after 1445 out of 4067 cases were linked to attendees according to the Health Ministry.

[https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/04/indias-covid-19-super-spreader-tablighi-jamaat-has-links-to-jihad-terror-activities-in-north-america-and-europe?utm\\_](https://www.jihadwatch.org/2020/04/indias-covid-19-super-spreader-tablighi-jamaat-has-links-to-jihad-terror-activities-in-north-america-and-europe?utm_)



# No Transport, Muslim Men Carry Hindu Woman's Bier For Cremation In Indore

New Delhi:

Unable to find a vehicle amid the nationwide lockdown, a Hindu woman's bier was carried by her Muslim neighbours to a cremation ground in Madhya Pradesh's Indore. The young men also helped the woman's sons with her last rites as most of her relatives did not participate in the funeral due to fears of coronavirus. Videos and photos, that have been widely shared on social media, show the woman's bier being carried by the young men.

Wearing masks, the youths made arrangements for the funeral and carried the elderly woman's bier on their shoulders to the cremation ground around 2.5 kms away, state Congress spokesman Narendra Saluja told news agency PTI.

The 65-year-old woman died on Monday after a prolonged illness. She is survived by two sons who could come home much after her death due to lockdown restrictions.

Senior Congress leader and former chief

minister Kamal Nath applauded the gesture of the Muslim youths, saying they have set an example in society.

"It is praiseworthy that people from the Muslim community along with the woman's two sons carried the body on their shoulders for her last rites. This has set an example in society. It reflects our Ganga-Jamuni culture and such scenes enhance mutual love and brotherhood," he said in a tweet in Hindi.

The Muslim youth told news agency PTI that they considered it as their duty and knew the woman since their childhood

India has been under lockdown since March 24 to fight the spread of the deadly novel coronavirus that has affected over 4,000 people in India alone.

<https://www.ndtv.com/cities/no-transport-muslim-men-carry-hindu-womans-bier-for-cremation-in-indore-2207889>



# Thou Shalt Practice Social Distancing

By Mustafa Akyol



The coronavirus pandemic is likely to be a watershed event in world history, with a deep impact on society, politics, and religions. One can expect the rise of new messianic movements, for example, with some claiming that the pandemic is a sign that the apocalypse is coming, as some already believe. Conversely, some believers may lose their faith, because they struggle with the age-old “problem of evil”—why God would allow all this to happen—and find no good answer to it, as some frankly admit.

Many religious people will also see the pandemic as a test. They are absolutely right: The coronavirus pandemic is a major test for all religions. But it is a test of not merely their faith, as many believers typically think. It is also a test of their reason—whether they act rationally or irrationally, whether they help save lives or put them at grave risk.

At the heart of this test is a conflict between the rational requirements of health and the traditional requirements of religion. Rational health-conscious behavior, as advised by virtually all medical experts, requires social distancing—namely, that people stay away from each other, preferably at home. Most religious traditions, however, require social gathering—especially bringing the faithful to churches, mosques, synagogues, and temples. So, which of these principles should come first?

The right answer should not be too difficult to find, as many religious leaders and communities have done since the emergence of the pandemic in late February. The Catholic Church, for example, responded to the deadly outbreak in

Italy in early March by suspending all communal church services, “in coordination with the measures launched by the Italian authorities.” Soon after, Pope Francis prayed to a stunningly empty St. Peter’s Square, which is typically filled by huge crowds. He also called on the governments of the world to put “people first” and to take all the measures against a “viral genocide.”

Similarly, Saudi authorities, whose responses to disasters have at times been irrationally fatalistic, took the right step in early March by closing the two holy mosques in Mecca and Medina, which are always swarmed by worshippers. Seeing the stunning photos of the empty Kaaba convinced many Muslims around the world that something really unprecedented was going on. In many Muslim-majority nations, one after another, communal prayers were called off. Even the call to prayer issued from mosque loudspeakers, which includes the line, “come to prayer, come to salvation,” was reworded in Kuwait to say, “pray in your homes.”

In Orthodox Jewish circles, many rabbis also did the right thing by calling off synagogue services and reminding their communities, the “Torah obligation to protect the sanctity of life transcends all other considerations,” as Britain’s chief rabbi reminded the country’s Jews. Many Hindu temples were closed down in India. In Thailand, one of the worst-hit countries in Southeast Asia, some Buddhist monks began producing face masks from recycled plastic.

However, not all religious leaders and communities have taken such rational



precautions against the pandemic. Some even rejected them in the name of faith.

One was Rodney Howard-Browne, the pastor of a large evangelical church in Florida, who defied the state's public orders for social distancing, claiming that his church was "the safest place." (Soon, he got arrested for doing so.) Another one was Jerry Falwell Jr., who dismissed the nationwide response to the pandemic as an "overreaction" and reopened his Liberty University after the spring break. (Soon after, many students tested positive for the coronavirus.) Another reckless Christian leader was Majdi Allawi of the Maronite Catholic Church in Lebanon, who reportedly dismissed protective measures such as wearing masks and using hand sanitizer. "Jesus is my protection," he said, "He is my sanitizer."

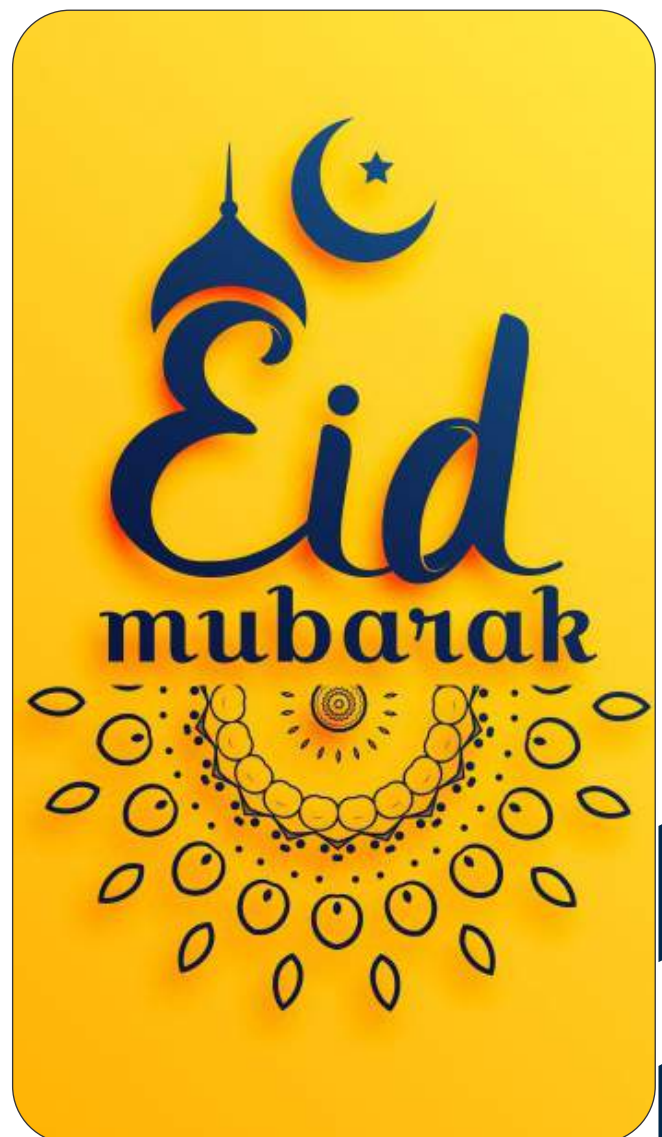
Some ultra-Orthodox Jewish communities have also been dangerously reckless. In the New York borough of Brooklyn, many members of the Hasidic community disregarded social distancing and gathered for Purim celebrations and religious weddings and funerals as the virus shut down the city in March. Several of those communities soon showed high rates of coronavirus infection. In Israel, some ultra-Orthodox leaders resisted the government's calls for closing of yeshivas, where students study religious texts, insisting, "canceling Torah study is more dangerous than corona."

In the Muslim world, too, there have been disastrously naive reactions to the pandemic. One of the most dramatic cases was that of the Tablighi Jamaat, an India-based Sunni missionary movement with as many as 80 million members around the world. Despite all the warnings, they held huge dayslong gatherings, first in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, and then in New Delhi, soon proving to be a "super-spreader" of the virus in South and Southeast Asia. (The incident led some Hindu nationalists to spew religious hatred and blame Muslims for a coronajihad, which became a trending hashtag on Twitter. But it was not a malicious

conspiracy—just like the case of the Shincheonji Church of Jesus of South Korea, which also acted as super spreader, it was simply catastrophic carelessness.)

In the mainstream Sunni and Shiite world, rational precautions have been taken by most governments, but often belatedly, and despite resistance from the most dogmatic believers. In Iran, one of the worst-affected countries, when authorities finally banned people from Shiite shrines, angry crowds stormed them. In Pakistan, where most clerics refused to limit mosque gatherings, police officers who tried to disperse crowds from Friday prayers were stoned by furious worshippers.

<https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/04/08/thou-shalt-practice-social-distancing/>



# What I Found in Madrasa, Is Difficult to Translate and Compress In to A Few Words



By Annie Zaidi



Pupils at a madrasa in Bhopal

Tens of thousands of poor Muslim children have been left stranded in the limited spaces their circumstances have given them

I hadn't gone out looking for a madrasa. I had gone looking for the dreams and self-concept of Muslim women and girls. As it happened, I found a group of women activists and philanthropists, and among them, a gentleman who had come looking for donations for foundlings and orphans. He also ran a madrasa for girls and, on impulse, I asked permission to come and interview them.

I had never stepped into a madrasa before and had certain preconceived notions about what happens there. My ideas about madrasas were of little boys sitting cross-legged in rows, white-capped, and learning almost always by rote. I lacked the imagination to go beyond, and assumed I'd find a little girl version of the same image.

What I found is difficult to translate and compress into a few words. The little girls filed into a room downstairs, ushered in and watched over by their teachers and seniors. They sat in chairs, on a takht, wherever there was room.

Uncertain, diffident, probably wondering what I wanted. Starting with the older students, I asked each one to tell me her name, a line or two about herself, where she'd come from, what she studied, and what she hoped to be when she grew up. And name by name, the stereotype crumbled.

All the girls were resident students and many had lived there for years. Many had already spent more of their short lives here than they had with their parents in their villages. The majority had come from villages and Qasbas in Uttar Pradesh but some were from Bihar, and one child (perhaps six or seven years old; she wasn't too sure) had come from as far away as Nepal.

To say that they had come to study and live there is obviously not accurate. Children never get to choose. Whether they are sent to posh boarding schools with horses to ride and swimming pools, or an orphanage, or a madrasa where they are guaranteed precious little except simple meals and a roof over their heads — adults decide. When I asked the girls what their parents did for a living, it also became amply clear that the adults also had very little choice. Most of them worked in the informal economy, in jobs that don't pay much.

Some of the girls had gone to a village government school for a couple of years before being sent away to the madrasa. A lot of the older girls were reticent about discussing the circumstances that kept them here. The little ones probably didn't know how to describe those circumstances. Many had older sisters or cousins also living here.

It was soon evident that the girls were here because it was seen as a relatively safe, respectable space for them to live in and gather what education they could. There was no real fee — perhaps families who could afford it gave something, but lessons and meals were obviously funded through community philanthropy.

They were taught language, mathematics and geography along with readings of the Quran. A few of the girls said Urdu literature was their favourite subject, others maths.

When I asked what they wanted to be when they grew up, all of them had an answer and it wasn't 'housewife'. Most girls said Alima, which is Urdu for a learned woman or teacher. A couple of them dared to whisper 'doctor'.

Later, it struck me that so many said they wanted to be an Alima because the only working women they had seen growing up were teachers. Many of their seniors had studied in the same institution and stayed on to teach.

I walked away that afternoon with a heavy heart. When I looked around the building, I saw an open terrace where laundry was drying, and large rooms shared by several girls. This was not very different from the hostel I lived in as an undergraduate. It was just much poorer.

In college, I lived in a hostel administered by nuns. It was very strict. We were not allowed to step out without written permission nor receive visitors other than families.

Meal timings were strict, as were bath times. The very taps were locked up and warm water rationed in winter. We were well fed, of course. Each of us had a bed to herself but we certainly didn't have six feet of space between beds.

The madrasa was one tenth the size of the hostel I lived in, perhaps smaller. It didn't have a vast campus attached or the real estate to allow sports. It certainly didn't have the money for lessons in art. It probably didn't serve pastries on

Sunday afternoons.

I think of those little girls now, during this harsh lockdown. If, instead of four hours, the Prime Minister had given them four days' notice, they still wouldn't have been able to go home. Even four weeks may not have been enough. They didn't have mobile phones. They didn't have money. They didn't have transport. Their parents had no money to fetch them in a hurry. Their teachers could not afford to drop them home. I doubt the state could have made arrangements for their safe conduct home, with food and trusted escorts.

How can a madrasa make alternative arrangements for physical distancing in the midst of a lockdown? What are they expected to do? Magically transform a building to 20 times its size? Procure dozens of new beds and bedding overnight? Conjure a sprawling dining hall out of thin air?

Our right to demand adherence to rules framed by the state in a health crisis must be tempered by our willingness to accept that we have failed to take collective responsibility for each individual child, each school, each worker. Just as millions of migrants were left stranded in metropolises with no wages and no transport, tens of thousands of poor Muslim children have been left stranded in the limited spaces their circumstances have given them.

It is not for us to ask how big these spaces are. It is for us to ask how we can enable those spaces to expand, in both a physical and a social and intellectual way.

<https://www.thehindu.com/society/how-can-a-poor-madrasa-magically-conjure-up-many-more-rooms-in-the-midst-of-a-lockdown/article31366116.ece>





# Polishing the Truth

By Irfan Husain



EVERY time there's a manmade or natural global crisis, thousands of people pop out of the woodwork to claim that it was caused by dark, inimical forces.

For example, if you type "9/11 conspiracy theories" into Google, you will get over four million results. It seems that many have little to do but cook up bizarre explanations for obvious events.

My favourite 9/11 conspiracy theory is the one recounted by a highly educated and well-travelled Sri Lankan friend who claimed that the Japanese were behind the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers and Pentagon. "Why the Japanese?" I asked, slightly bemused. "To avenge themselves for the atomic bombs dropped by the Americans on Nagasaki and Hiroshima."

Another jaw-dropping claim was made at a dinner party in London soon after the 2004 tsunami. As a dozen guests expressed their sorrow over the lives lost in many Asian countries, one person I had never met said loudly: "I hope you don't believe the tsunami was a natural event!"

## ARTICLE CONTINUES AFTER AD

He went on to educate us about an American experiment to control the weather by exploding nuclear devices off the Indonesian coast. These blasts caused tectonic plates to be displaced, thereby triggering the killer tsunami.

In most such events, our departure from the true path laid down by our Maker is invoked as a reason. After the tsunami struck, clerics across the Muslim world talked about the "adultery, drinking and fornication" that went on to celebrate Christmas to explain the wrath of God.

And now, we have the Covid-19 pandemic that is roiling economies and societies across the world. Social distancing and lockdowns have brought life to a standstill.

Why are we so hooked on conspiracy theories and predictions?

As it erupted out of Wuhan in China, the conspiracies were relatively simple: bats from a certain cave in Hubei province had been stored close to pangolins (or civets) in a food market in Wuhan. The viruses from these two animals made their way into the respiratory system of a human customer. And very soon, his breath was inhaled by others, and the combined viruses formed a lethal cocktail that came to be known as a novel coronavirus.

Not being a biologist, I may have got some of this wrong, but this is the gist of what I have read. However, the cause and effect of the disease was not given much religious weight in the beginning. Initially, geopolitics was used to explain its origins: the Americans were quick to blame the Chinese for not reporting its emergence in time. Donald Trump was openly racist in calling it the 'Chinese virus'. As the death toll in the US mounted, the Republicans accused the Chinese government of using the disease to weaken the American economy.

The Chinese retaliated by accusing the Americans of manufacturing Covid-19, and planting it in Wuhan when 280 American soldiers visited the city for military games last October. Trump hit back by claiming that the Chinese had a secret laboratory for military-grade virology research in Wuhan.

In the UK, a handful of cranks have sabotaged

around 20 masts carrying the new 5G cell phone signal. They claim that this bandwidth causes coronavirus to infect human beings. Dozens of engineers have also been attacked in this mindless campaign.

To this day, many believe that Nasa's claim to have landed 12 astronauts on the moon in six lunar missions between 1969 and 1972 was faked. According to them, photos and films were edited and doctored to make it appear that the Americans had won the space race. Muslim clerics are at the forefront of this particular theory.

Then, of course, there is the Flat Earth Society that disputes the evidence of our planet being a sphere. So what drives normal people to adopt such bizarre positions on established facts?

Whenever I have got into a discussion with one of them in an effort to restore sanity, I get some snippet from the internet thrown at me. But it is Nostradamus who is the father of conspiracy theories. This 16th-century doctor and astronomer made a number of predictions, and

many of them are cited today to underpin contemporary interpretations of events. He is even supposed to have predicted Donald Trump's election, something most modern pollsters and pundits got terribly wrong. The bad news is that he also foresaw Trump's re-election.

The problem with attempting to interpret Nostradamus's predictions is that they are cast in extremely vague language. Thus, when he writes "The eagle flew from the west to the east", this is taken as Hitler's initially victorious march against the Soviet Union.

Why are we so hooked on conspiracy theories and predictions? The reality is that the unvarnished truth is pretty boring, so we seek to cast it into a more attractive version. When we read astrological prophecies written by soothsayers, we are trying to put a bit of colour into our own drab lives.

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<https://www.dawn.com/news/1552058/polishing-the-truth>



## Egypt to suspend Ramadan group iftar, other activities

By Joanne Serrieh

DUBAI -- Egypt will suspend all Ramadan activities and group iftars due to the spread of the deadly coronavirus, the Ministry of Endowments announced on Tuesday.

The ministry also noted it had previously decided to prohibit the establishment of iftar tables, a tradition Muslims take part in to provide food for the poor during the holy month in the vicinity of mosques or their surrounding space



Ramadan tentatively begins on April 23. -- Al Arabiya English



# When is the best time to workout in Ramazan?

By Alina Islam

I think we can all agree that when Ramazan falls during the summer months, the fasts become especially trying. Even having to walk for a few minutes in the scorching heat is enough to drain us, and makes us crawl into our beds with the air-conditioner on full blast as soon as we get home. And now, here I am, writing an article about exercising in Ramazan.

Have I lost my mind?

Is it not enough that we're all fasting while working, studying and continuing to run a household? Is it necessary to add this extra pressure of exercising as well?

The first step

Let's take a step back for a moment. Before delving into the why and how of exercising in Ramazan, I will first talk about movement or the lack thereof during this time. By movement, I'm referring to simple actions such as walking, bending, climbing, pushing, pulling or lifting.

Basically, the everyday movements that help improve our circulation, reduce stiffness, regulate blood pressure, drain our lymph to



remove waste, and even release endorphins to improve our mood. Unfortunately, this level of everyday movement drastically declines during Ramazan.

We've become extremely accustomed to easing our discomfort in any way possible, whether it's sleeping through most of our fast, or forming a close relationship with the living room couch. Needless to say, this isn't the best idea for our overall health.

Fewer movements throughout the day lead to poor circulation, stiffness of the joints, more aches and pains and even a sour mood. So before you start thinking about exercise during Ramazan, the first step should be attempting to just move as much as you usually would. Once this foundation is set, you can choose to maximise these health benefits by coming up with an exercise routine. It's important to





recognise that everyone has a different health history and personal circumstances, so if you're unable to exercise during Ramazan, it's not the end of the world. I want to clarify that exercising during Ramazan is not harmful, if it is done the right way.

In fact, for example, if you're looking to lose weight, Ramazan is actually one of the best times to capitalise on the body's increased fat burning rate.

When is the best time?

Simply put, the best time to exercise is when you can replenish your body with nutrients right afterwards. Your body requires food and water to rehydrate itself, replenish electrolytes and prevent muscle atrophy.

Let's take a look at your options:

#### Option 1: Before Fajr

Given that Fajr is around 4am, it is unlikely that you will be willing to wake up at 3am to exercise before eating Sehri. If you are, more power to you! But keep in mind that since exercise raises cortisol levels it may be hard to fall back asleep afterwards.

#### Option 2: Before Iftar

Although this may initially be difficult to adjust to, this is the best time to exercise, especially if you're looking for fat loss.

Exercising in a fasting state will force your body to dip into its fat reserves much earlier, and you will be able to replenish your body with nutrients right afterwards at Iftar.

#### Option 3: After Iftar, before Isha

This option depends mostly on the time zone that you're in, and requires careful planning.

For example, if you're in Pakistan and your fast breaks between 7 and 7:30 pm, you could do the following: have a small snack such as water, dates and a fruit chaat at Iftar, attend Maghrib prayers, squeeze in a 20 or 30-minute workout around 8pm, followed by dinner and then Isha prayers.

However, if iftar in your household is often

combined with dinner, or if it's a large family affair, realistically you may not have time to yourself until 10pm (or even later), especially if you regularly participate in taraweeh prayers at night.

But what if you're living abroad and your fast breaks closer to 8:30 or 9pm? I would not recommend exercising at that time.

Realistically, exercise would not be possible until after 9pm, which would further delay when you can eat dinner and when you can go to sleep. Plus, exercising and eating a large meal that close to bedtime may make it difficult to fall asleep in the first place.

What type of exercises should I do?

If you're exercising before Iftar, keep it to light cardio such as jogging, biking or yoga for 20 to 45 minutes. Or if you'd prefer shorter, high intensity training, you can do a 10-20 minute bodyweight workout.

However, if you'd like to include weight training, I would recommend doing this after you break your fast. Strength training requires, well, strength. And for that type of strength, your body turns to glycogen (carbs) stored in your muscles.

Fasting leads to depleted levels of glycogen, which means your body won't be able to exert the strength or endurance that's required to see results.

Take a look: Better sore than sorry –How to get a toned body

Not only can you potentially injure yourself, but you might negatively impact harm muscle growth since your body will break down protein instead to fuel the workout. When you do lift weights after Iftar, keep it shorter than you typically would, and go lighter if necessary.

At the end of the day, simply try to respect your body during Ramazan. Respect it by giving it the movement it craves, but also respect it by not pushing it too hard.



# Gardening: 'How often should I change the soil?'

By Zahra Nasir

**Q.** Every March, I dig up and throw away the top three inches of the soil in the kiyari I use for growing flowers in. I do this because it seems the soil has lost its nutrients. Then I replace it with new khaad and mitti, and sow my summer flowers. When the summer flowers are finished, I plant winter flowers in the same kiyari without adding any more khaad, etc. Then I repeat the process from March. I need to know if I am doing the right thing or, if not, what I should do instead. Also, how often should the soil be changed?

just once a year for flowers — twice if you decide to grow vegetables — and that will suffice. Soil needs caring for and feeding, and if it is done properly, soil fertility will increase over the years to come.

**Q.** Is there somewhere in Islamabad where I can get raspberry, blackberry, blueberry and other berry plants?

**A.** Unless pot-grown plants — as against those growing in the ground — are available, you now need to wait until late next winter/very early spring and then do a thorough search of all the



Flourishing flower bed

**A.** Soil should never be dug out and thrown away unless, in an extreme case, it has been irreversibly poisoned by something such as lethal misuse of weed killer, etc. Soil is a precious resource and even the thought of someone throwing it away makes my hair stand on end! The soil nutrients may be depleted after being utilised by both your summer and then winter flowers but, as you add khaad when you put in the soil each March, it really should still be quite fertile. Please stop this wasteful process and simply feed the soil that is there; feed it with khaad and/or completely rotted down compost,

nurseries in your area. If you don't see the plants you want, ask the nursery owner if they can be specially ordered for you as, I believe, they may have to be brought in from Mardan or Peshawar.

**Q.** What is the best way to develop a kitchen garden intended, in time, to provide enough fresh produce for both the home and a restaurant? Can this be managed in pots, in a small garden, partly shaded and partly open to the sun, in Islamabad?

**A.** Depending on the size of your family, you may be able to grow at least some of your daily





Kitchen garden produce

vegetable requirements in a small area of pots but, I suspect, not enough to make buying vegetables a thing of the past, and certainly not enough for a continuous restaurant supply. For information on how to develop your kitchen garden, I suggest that you study all available material, including this weekly column,

pick the brains of other garden enthusiasts and, perhaps, join your local horticultural society whose members will, undoubtedly, have much knowledge to share.

**Q.** I want to grow vegetables using a hydroponics system. I have watched several tutorials on the internet in this regard, but couldn't make anything out of them. Can you please guide me? Also, please tell me from where I can get the necessary hydroponic nutrients. I reside in Peshawar.

**A.** Sorry. I cannot advise you on hydroponics as, personally speaking, I do not support the producing of vegetables by feeding them with water-soluble chemical formulae.

**Q.** Why are blisters appearing on the leaves of my *Alstonia* plants? Is there a remedy for this problem? I live in Islamabad.

**A.** *Alstonias* are often plagued by minute flying insects called *Pauropsylla Tuberculata*. These pests lay their eggs inside the leaves where they hatch into larvae, forming the galls/blisters that you see. The larvae eat their way out of the leaves, develop wings and fly off to repeat the cycle. Control is extremely difficult. Removing all infected leaves and disposing of them

sensibly may help but, in cases of severe infestation, the shrubs/trees can become so unsightly — even die off — that it is recommended to remove them and plant something else instead.

**Q.** Every summer a big attack of flies ruins my guava crop in Bara Kahu, Islamabad. Kindly suggest a natural remedy.

**A.** Please refer to the gardening columns published in the January 5, 2020 and February 16, 2020 issues of this magazine. Both of them deal with this problem.

**Q.** Why do you advise us against adding milk and yoghurt to our compost bins? How do they harm the process of composting?

**A.** I have never given such advice! On the contrary, both milk and yoghurt, mixed with water at a ratio of nine parts water to one part milk/yoghurt, are highly efficient plant food which, if you can afford it or

if you have a milking cow/goat, can also be applied undiluted. There is nothing at all bad about adding them to compost heaps either; although, for a day or two, they may smell.

Please continue sending your gardening queries to [zahrahnasir@hotmail.com](mailto:zahrahnasir@hotmail.com). Remember to include your location. The writer does not respond directly by email. Emails with attachments will not be opened

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# Persian Gulf: Yesterday, today and tomorrow

**Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini**

April 29 is celebrated in Iran as 'Persian Gulf Day'. But why do Iranians care so much about the Persian Gulf that they dedicate a day to it in their official calendar? In fact, the Persian Gulf is not just a body of water, but part of the culture, history and identity of ours and the whole region. This gulf also plays an important role in the region's politics and economy.

The Persian Gulf is an important and strategic historical gulf. Historically, the shores of the gulf and the rivers that flowed into it have been the site of the first human civilisations. By studying the history of the Persian Gulf, you can go to sea with ancient fishermen; hunt pearls from Qeshm Island, go to Mesopotamia and dig out the ancient inscriptions of Cyrus; listen to historical stories of the atrocities committed by Portuguese and British colonialists on the island of Hormuz, and hear the story of the outbreak of bloody wars, including Iraq's imposed war on Iran and the so-called Persian Gulf War.

So, for Iranians, the Persian Gulf is not just a sea, but part of history, identity and national heritage. This gulf is the ancestral home of the Iranians and they will not let foreigners to log it without permission. But beyond Iran, the Persian Gulf is a symbol of civilisation, culture and history that connect the nations of the region. Therefore, now all the countries in the region have a responsibility to preserve the historical heritage of this region in the same



historical and original way. These countries are not the same in terms of the history of creation and civilisation. Some civilisations date back more than 7,000 years, while others do not exceed a few decades; however, the historical character, originality and dignity of each country requires that it be proud of its resources and not be greedy about the cultural, geographical and ancient resources of others. No country is allowed to create a false identity for itself by distorting history, overturning the facts and stealing the cultural heritage of others.

The same importance of identical and strategic importance of the Persian Gulf has caused some racist individuals and organisations to use fake names for this gulf in the last few decades in order to be honoured by attributing it to them. But researchers, lawyers, historians and lovers of the Persian Gulf have prevented this with the help of the United Nations. All ancient geographical documents and maps in different languages such as Persian, Arabic, Spanish, etc. have referred to that gulf as the "Persian Gulf".

Thus, the distortion of its name is nothing but the blatant denial of a historical truth. The United Nations, citing ancient maps and texts, has been emphasising the name of the Persian Gulf since 1990 with the issuance of various resolutions and statements. Also, in October 2018, the World Intellectual Property Organisation registered the name of the Persian Gulf in an official document. Based on these documents, which stem from international law, no individual, government or organisation can call the Persian Gulf by using any other title.

The Persian Gulf is of special economic and unique importance. The gulf contains countless valuable marine resources and has valuable animal and plant species, the preservation of which requires the efforts of littoral states. The gulf is also an important international waterway, with its privileged location between the three continents of Europe, Asia and Africa, making it a highway for maritime trade in the region and the world.

But perhaps most importantly, the Persian Gulf has abundant hydrocarbon resources, including oil and gas. For more than a hundred years, Iran and the countries of the region have exploited the hydrocarbon resources of the Persian Gulf and its shores, and much of the economic growth and development of the region (including urban, industrial and even social development) is due to these valuable resources. An important part of the region's contemporary social and political history has also been affected by resources from oil and gas sales. And we all know that the future of the region is increasingly linked to the Persian Gulf.

All the historical, cultural-identical, economic, geo-economic and geopolitical aspects of the Persian Gulf make it doubly important to maintain the security of this gulf for the whole region. Unfortunately, in the last few decades, the serenity of the blue waves of the Persian Gulf has been disturbed by the presence of US-led

naval fleets. Arms-producing governments, have created a sense of false fear and intimidation in order to foment an arms race and sell as many deadly weapons as possible by spreading false narratives of the goals and strategies of countries in the region against each other. Therefore, the withdrawal of trans-regional forces, which are the source of convulsions, threats and the escalation of the arms race, is a requirement for maintaining lasting peace and security in the region.

Accordingly, the Islamic Republic of Iran has submitted a peace plan for the region, called "Hormuz Peace Endeavor (HOPE)" to the United Nations. In this plan, the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran suggests that Iran, in cooperation with the countries of the region, will ensure the security of the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz.

Hope is based on the principles of respect for territorial sovereignty, peaceful coexistence, good neighbourliness and non-interference in the internal affairs of countries. With this plan, the Islamic Republic of Iran once again emphasises the need for cooperation between all countries in the region and the promotion of multilateralism and mutual trust to maintain peace, tranquillity and security in the region.

The important message that needs to be conveyed in the world today is to let the Persian Gulf continue to be a place to connect the people of our region, not a place for fear, ambiguity and worry about the future of this area. The Islamic Republic of Iran has shown its goodwill for the transformation of the Persian Gulf into a gulf of friendship; now other regional and international actors are facing the great global test as well.







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