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Has the Pandemic Brought the Best in Us?



Zakaria Virk, Editor



Corona virus has been raging devastation all over the world since December 2019. Despite hardships caused by the outbreak that have turned lives upside down, led to lost jobs in the millions, innumerable deaths, and forced people to be separated from one another, the questions arises has this pandemic also brought out the best in us? Or in some cases the worst in us?

While it is bringing out the worst in some it is bringing out the best in many. All around us, people are making personal sacrifices to get society through this. And if the rest of us follow their example, perhaps we can build something meaningful and long-lasting out of a challenging situation. Nobody knows how long this pandemic will last, but experts suggest it could be many months. Until then, this somewhat dystopian reality we've wound up in is our new normal. Empty streets, full homes, cluttered minds. Some young people in Tuscaloosa Alabama have displayed disgusting behavior by throwing parties where people who have coronavirus attend and the first person to

get infected receives a payout. Some refuse to wear mask saying it is an encroachment on their civil liberties. During all this one person has downplayed the virus by saying: it is a hoax, one day it will disappear, it will go away stay calm, its conspiracy against America, its fading away, more tests so more cases, and we have it under control, 99% of cases are totally harmless. So far he has made 2783 false claims, referring to it as China Virus. Asian Americans are facing a range of threats and challenges during the coronavirus pandemic -- virus which has killed more than 148,000 in the U.S. alone, more than 600K worldwide. People of Chinese descent are being harassed, spit on and their businesses buy-cotted. There is spike in hate crimes because some people associate Covid 19 with China and Asian population.

Medical staffs have been readying themselves for what could be the healthcare crisis of the century. Retired doctors, nurses and nurse practitioners are coming out of retirement to assist. Also working long hours are those involved in supplying food and medicine to households, from farmers to factory workers, truckers to store employees.

Many doctors have succumbed to coronavirus. Although schools are closed, but lots of teachers are still working. Banks, Pharmacies and grocery stores have implemented "seniors' hours" so that the elderly, other high-risk groups can shop more safely. Yes, we're all in this together, albeit there is no light at end of the tunnel.



Pakistan: Ruling party poised to inflict damage to education system – Hafiz and Qaris will be teachers in schools

By Prof Pervez Hoodbhoy

BE prepared, Pakistan! Imran Khan's government is poised to inflict damage upon this country's education system in a manner never seen before. Its so-called Single National Curriculum (SNC) hides systemic changes going far deeper than the ones conceived and executed by the



extremist regime of Gen Ziaul Haq. Implementation is scheduled for 2021. At first glance a uniform national curriculum is hugely attractive. Some see it striking a lethal blow at the abominable education apartheid that has wracked Pakistan from day one. By the year, a widening gap has separated beneficiaries of elite private education from those crippled by bad public schooling. So what could be better than the rich child and the poor child studying the same subjects from the same books and being judged by the same standards?

But this morally attractive idea has been hijacked, corrupted, mutilated and beaten out of shape by those near-sighted persons now holding Pakistan's future in their hands, and who, like their boss, kowtow to the madressah establishment. Prime Minister Khan was widely criticized in 2016-17 for making huge grants to madrasahs of the late Maulana Samiul Haq, self-professed father of the Taliban who was murdered by an associate in mysterious circumstances. The SNC massively prioritizes ideology over education quality and acquisition of basic skills. As yet only SNC plans for Class I-V are public. But the huge volume of religious material they contain beats all curriculums in Pakistan's history. A

column-by-column comparison with two major madrasah systems — Tanzeemul Madaris and Rabtaul Madaris — reveals a shocking fact. Ordinary schools will henceforth impose more rote learning than even these madrasahs. Normal schoolteachers being under-equipped religiously, SNC calls for summoning an army of madrasah-educated holy men — hafiz's and qaris — as paid teachers inside schools. How this will affect the general ambiance and the safety of students is an open question. The push for a uniform national curriculum idea derives from three flawed assumptions:

First: It is false that quality differences between Pakistan's various education streams stem from pursuing different curricula. When teaching any secular subject such as geography, social studies or science, all streams have to cover the same topics. While details and emphases obviously differ, each must deal with exactly seven continents and water being H₂O. Instead, learning differentials arise because students experience very different teaching methods and are evaluated using entirely different criteria. So, for example, a local examination board will typically ask a mathematics student to name the inventor of logarithms whereas an 'O'-level student must

actually use logarithms to solve some problem. The modern world expects students to reason their way through a question, not parrot facts.

Second: It is false that a hefty dose of piety will somehow equalize students of Aitchison College and your run-of-the-mill neighborhood school. The legendary Mahmood and Ayyaz prayed in the same suff (prayer line) and established a commonality without ending their master-slave relationship. Similarly, rich and poor schools will remain worlds apart unless equalized through school infrastructure, well-trained teachers, high quality textbooks and internet access. How the needed resources will be generated is anybody's guess. Under the PTI, defense is the only sector seeing increases instead of cuts.

Third: It is false that school systems belonging to the modern world can be brought onto the same page as madrasahs. Modern education rests squarely upon critical thinking, and success/failure is determined in relation to problem solving and worldly knowledge. Madrasah education goals are important but different. They seek a more religiously observant student and a better life after death. Understandably, critical thinking is unwelcome. While some madrasahs now teach secular subjects like English, science and computers, this comes after much arm-twisting. Soon after 9/11, madrasahs were spotlighted as terrorist breeding grounds. Musharraf's government, beholden as it was to America, ordered them to teach secular subjects. Most rejected this outright but others were successfully pressured. However, madrasahs teach secular and religious subjects identically; reasoning is sparse and authoritarianism dominates. While the new Class I-V SNC document also discusses secular subjects, much of this is pointless tinkering with the minutiae of teaching English, general knowledge, general science, mathematics and social studies. They are not accompanied by plausible plans for how the necessary intellectual or physical resources will be garnered and the plans implemented. Still bigger changes are around the corner. The Punjab government has made

teaching of the Holy Quran compulsory at the college and university level. Without passing the required examination no student will be able to get a BA, BSc, BE, ME, MA, MSc, MPhil, PhD or medical degree. Even the Zia regime did not have such blanket requirements. To get a university teaching job in the 1980s, you had to name all the wives of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) and recite some difficult religious passages such as Dua-i-Qunoot. Still, students could get degrees without that. That option is now closed.

Starkly inferior to their counterparts in Iran, India and Bangladesh, Pakistani students perform poorly in all international science and mathematics competitions. Better achievers are invariably from the elite 'O'-'A'-level stream. More worrying is that most students are unable to express themselves coherently and grammatically in any language, whether Urdu or English. They have stopped reading books. Significantly, as yet the PTI's new education regime is mum on how it will advance its goal of closing a huge skill deficit. So poor is the present quality of technical and vocational institutes that private employers must totally retrain the graduates. That's why private-sector industrial growth is small and entire state enterprises, such as PIA and Pakistan Steel Mills, have collapsed. Pakistan's space programme flopped but Iran has just put a military satellite into orbit and India is well on the way to Mars.

Empowered by the 18th Amendment, Pakistan's provinces should vigorously resist the regressive plan being thrust upon the nation by ideologues that have usurped power in Islamabad. Else Pakistan will end up as the laughing stock of South Asia, left behind even by Arab countries. Pakistan's greatest need — and its single greatest failure — is its tragic failure to impart essential life skills to its citizens. To move ahead, the priority should be to educate rather than score political points.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1569679/education-ptis-plan-exposed>



Islamabad capital to get its first Hindu temple complex



Construction of the first Hindu temple in the Pakistani capital Islamabad began on Tuesday, a long-standing demand by the minority community put in action under the government of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The site of the Shri Krishna Mandir (temple) complex, will include a crematorium, accommodation for visitors, a community hall and a parking space spread across an area of 4 kanals (2,023sq metres). The plan was approved in 2017 under former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government, but construction had been delayed until this year by administrative hurdles. "This is very big step for the Hindu community and Pakistan," Pritam Das, an Islamabad resident and real-estate professional, told Al Jazeera. Das said Pakistani Hindus across the country, and especially in Islamabad, were grateful to Prime Minister Khan and his government for facilitating the construction of the temple and other related facilities, which he said was much needed considering the steady growth of the capital's Hindu population.

"This will send the soft image of the government of Pakistan to all over the world," Das added. Pakistan is home to about eight million Hindus, according to estimates from the country's Hindu Council. The last official figures were released in

1998, when the population of the minority community was put at three million. Most Hindus are based in the southern province of Sindh, which borders India.

The latest numbers on religious minorities in the 2017 census are yet to be published. Islamabad is home to an estimated 3,000 Hindus.

"For the Hindu population in Islamabad, there is no place to gather ... there was no temple, there was no community hall ... which caused many issues for the community," Lal Chand Mahli, parliamentary secretary on human rights and a member of the governing party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), told Al Jazeera.

The capital also lacks a crematorium, which is needed for Hindu funeral services, Mahli noted. This meant people were forced to take their deceased loved ones to their hometowns for burial, sometimes travelling hundreds of kilometres. Furthermore, the new temple complex will work as a cultural centre for many Hindu visitors from far-flung places such as Sindh province.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/pakistani-capital-temple-complex-gov-aid-200625112740210.html>



Cynthia Ritchie working on ISPR and KP government projects, court told



ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Interior has informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) that US blogger Cynthia D. Ritchie is living in Pakistan on an 'extended' visa and she is working on film projects in collaboration with the military's media affairs wing Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government.

The Ministry in its report submitted to the IHC on Friday stated that Ms Ritchie "informed in her application that she had been working with Walkabout Films in collaboration with ISPR and the KPK Government on various film projects in the country. She further stated that she was waiting for complete documents for the formal extension of her business visa for one year which may take a few more days therefore she requested for a temporary extension of 30 days in her visa."

"She also attached a letter no. 01/IAAD/2018 dated 27.12.2018 from ISPR stating that Walkabout Films Private Limited is undertaking various projects in collaboration with ISPR and she is working with Walkabout Films on some projects," the report said. The court adjourned the hearing till next week for final arguments on the petition of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) activist Chaudhry Iftikhar Ahmed, who had challenged her long stay in Pakistan after the expiry of her business visa in March and alleged involvement in a media campaign against leaders of the opposition party.

According to the petition, her business visa expired on March 2, 2020 and she was not entitled to stay in Pakistan afterwards. The business visa had been granted on March 18, 2019 without fulfilling the legal formalities, the petitioner alleged, adding that she also misstated information in her visa extension application submitted to the Ministry of Interior after the expiry of her business visa in March.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1569647/cynthia-working-on-ispr-kp-govt-projects-court-told>



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What's With All the Covid-Death Shaming in Pakistan?

By Mohammed Hanif, NYTimes



Funeral prayers for a person who died of Covid-19, in Hyderabad, Pakistan, last month.

KARACHI, Pakistan — I've made a few condolence calls during the past few months. None of the people I called to condole about had died of Covid-19. I was always given another reason. It started with the death of an uncle two months ago. I called to condole with my cousin. We had not spoken in more than a decade. My uncle was in his 80s, and I thought it'd be a life-well-lived type of conversation, but soon it turned into a detailed and uncalled-for denial: My dad, your uncle, didn't die of Covid-19, my cousin said. My uncle had tested negative; he died of a heart attack, I was told. I hadn't even mentioned the C-word. I managed to get in my life-well-lived bit and hung up. Since then I have seen a pattern: I have made a half-dozen calls, the subject of my condolences were five men and one woman, between the ages of 31 and 82, and without my ever mentioning the subject, I was told, "It wasn't what you think."

There was one exception: A friend's father died and my friend told me his father had died of Covid-19 but that the family was trying to cover that up. My friend is a doctor who has lived and worked in the United States for the past three decades. When I called him, he told me about the circumstances of his father's death: His father was in his late 70s and like many, many Pakistanis had chosen to believe that either the new coronavirus is a hoax or it would shy away from good Muslims.

My friend's father had been socializing in his neighborhood of Karachi and offering his prayers in public, going into the mosque through the back door when, for a time, people his age were banned from visiting. He fell sick, was hospitalized, tested positive for the virus and died a couple of days later. This was in early May, around the time that the funerals of people who were dying of Covid-19 were being managed by the local authorities rather than relatives, because some members of the medical community believed then that the dead could infect the living. My friend's relatives had to bribe the police to get the body, and although initially they tried to hide the cause of death, the news leaked. "There were people coming to condole," my friend said, "but others were coming to complain: 'If your father had Covid, why did you let him mingle with our elders? What if he has infected us all?'"

The family denied vehemently that he had died of Covid-19. "We have lived on that street for generations. I can understand why my brothers did it." In Karachi, I called up a doctor to ask why people were hiding Covid-19 deaths. "People don't want to see some dead body and the police arrive at their homes at the same time," I was told. Another doctor said to me: "There is fear and shame and stigma attached to death by Covid, as if you got infected by this virus by doing something immoral or filthy, rather than by touching a door knob."

And what if nobody will come to your loved one's funeral? What if nobody comes to condole? What if people think that because you are related to the deceased you might pass the disease on to them and their children?

It's best to just deny what happened. Weren't people dying before this virus anyway? What's the harm in slightly shifting the cause of death? Even when someone dies of Covid-19 they don't really, really die of Covid-19; they die of the complications caused by Covid-19.

And so you lie and move on. After all, 98 percent of people who get infected do survive.

The longest condolence conversation I've had was with a close friend of mine whose sister passed away at the beginning of the month. She had been suffering from some unknown illness and was admitted to a private hospital in Lahore.

When her condition worsened, the family was asked to take her to Services Hospital, a major government facility with a designated ward for Covid-19 patients. My friend insisted that his sister had tested negative for the coronavirus, but when they arrived at the hospital a doctor directed them to the Covid section.

"If we had let her into that ward, they wouldn't even have given us the body," my friend said. Some of the myths around the virus have been propagated by the very people who were supposed to guide us through this crisis. Prime Minister Imran Khan has said that 90 percent of Covid-19 cases were like a "normal flu" and you don't go the hospital when you have the flu.

In early May, Asad Umar, the federal minister for planning, development and special initiatives and the man in charge of handling the coronavirus crisis, gave a briefing about how many more people in Pakistan die in traffic accidents than they do because of Covid-19 and yet, he said, "we still allow cars on roads, because their necessity is greater than the danger of those accidents."

The prime minister's health adviser, Zafar Mirza,

said early this month that the coming monsoon season would wash away the coronavirus. "But it's too early to tell," he added. As the first rains fell a few days later news came that Dr. Mirza had tested positive for the virus.

In late March, during the early weeks of the pandemic's spread in Pakistan, a telephone call between Nadeem Afzal Chan, one of the prime minister's advisers and spokesmen, and a political lieutenant of Mr. Chan's was leaked on social media. Mr. Chan is heard telling his aide, in rather colorful language, , to forget about political campaigning, go home and stay there with his kids.

After a Punjabi invective that can't be translated here, Mr. Chan said: "Thousands are dying, but the government is hiding it."

Later, Mr. Chan admitted that the conversation was genuine but said he had exaggerated the facts because his lieutenant, a friend, wasn't taking the threat seriously. "Political workers like him still want to campaign, inaugurate roads, and hold rallies."

Mr. Chan was lying to save a friend from maybe dying, and now people around me are lying because they don't want their friends to abandon them while they bury their dead.

I called up a doctor friend who has lost two colleagues during the past month, both of them because of Covid-19. Why are people still lying about this? I asked, again.

"I am, too," he said. "On all the death certificates I issue I write 'cardiac pulmonary failure' as the cause of death. That saves them the embarrassment."

And maybe then at least some people will be around when the last spade of earth is shoveled into those graves.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/16/opinion/coronavirus-pakistan-death.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage>



E-Learning In Pakistani Universities (Part- 1):PD

Prof Dr. Maqsudul Hasan Nuri

COVID-19 pandemic is raging and resulting in physical isolation and social distancing as preventive measures. Prime Minister and Chief Justice of Pakistan have lately advised relaxing of complete national lockdown with partial opening of businesses and normal life with due precautions. Yet in the universities and educational institutions the lockdown is still persisting. HEC has ordered E-learning classes to start immediately in a bid to save the Spring 2020 semester for students. Many universities have, therefore, pedagogically started experimenting with E-classes. Even if the virus were to soon subside, albeit unlikely till the end of this year as distance learning has come to stay and might continue in future. As transition from conventional live-in classes to the digital system takes place there are bound to be trials and errors due to some teething issues. With any new technology there are growing pains for end-users. But when procedures are streamlined and refined the impediments could be minimized. That the Pakistani universities and higher learning institutes should be switching to digital technology mode is the compelling need of the circumstances. In this regard, HEC has issued guidelines to devise syllabi and courses, craft lesson plans, attendance rules, exams and grading system. Were it not for the eruption of sudden, rapid covid-19, causing prolonged closure of universities, this decision would not taken place. In fact, the onset and persistence of the virus has only catalyzed switch over to E-learning. There are many advantages of E-learning such as economy, time, ease, accessibility and wider dissemination. Notwithstanding the obvious benefits there are some challenges that have to be addressed. These are particularly relevant in case of developing countries like Pakistan. They can be briefly described thus:

Lack of infrastructure: Computer literacy and facilities, especially in far- flung and rural areas of the country are problematic: computer illiteracy, lack of internet connection, speed, repair or maintenance work act as hindrances. Besides, poor households, lack of independence with family

members and restricted spaces pose frequent distractions. **Designation of work areas:** Lack of proper work areas can be a major hurdle in remote teaching and distance learning. For this, organizing learning space is paramount in ensuring continuity in learning -- now that usual classroom studies and structures may not exist. Students need designated quiet place to focus, read and work on assignments. **The environment,** if not conducive to concentration, can be dysfunctional and wastage of time. If teachers and students sit and focus for extended period of time, they need to be provided comfortable space that is free from all distractions. Therefore, it is important that each student has/her own private workspace, equipped with comfortable seating, a laptop or other device, necessary materials. While students can gain more knowledge, teachers also can get more time for latitude and time to work and do own research. By devising specialized lectures on topics of interest, they can offer useful webinars. **Reliance on Technology:** Technology is a big support in online learning at learning venues. Whereas the institution of university/ college/ school can provide technical facilities, infrastructure and basics of attendance through physical presence in online mode, if students miss crucial assignments they are counted as absent. Working under the rubric of technology mandates operating within the confines of network adapters, electricity, computers, servers, software, web browsers, routers, modems and more. If any one of these systems fail the connection becomes compromised resulting in loss of time. Since many teachers are utilizing Zoom calls and other video tools to conduct teaching and learning, it can be convenient for teachers to deliver recorded lectures, and derive some financial advantages as foreign universities. The students could benefit from noise-canceling headphones that allow them to focus on instruction. Moreover, headphones spare others, including house members to block out instructional videos or video chats. **Discipline and focus:** With most online degree programs



Islam and Hygiene

By Raja Ather Qudoos Nigeria



As the deadly coronavirus challenges humans from diverse religions, classes and ethnic backgrounds, some medical suggestions such as regular and thorough handwashing and maintenance of both personal and public hygiene have attained universal acceptance. For many non Muslims scholars, today's guidelines are completely in sync with what the Prophet Muhammad SAW practised in his lifetime and insisted on his followers doing in

order to enhance both personal and public health.

Cleanliness comes first in our religion among other important issues. Without

cleanliness, we cannot even worship. Before every prayer, it is mandatory for all Muslims to do wudu or ablution, which includes washing hands, face, nose, mouth, ears, ankles and feet. According to Islam, Muslims have to pray five times a day, which means they practice the ritual of wudu five times a day, adhering to the Prophet Muhammad's instruction on cleanliness.

A devout Muslim's cleanliness goes beyond wudu and daily rituals. The Holy Quran touches upon the importance of cleanliness in several verses, commanding the faithful to stay clean.

"God loves those who keep themselves clean," says one of the Quranic verses. (Albaqarah 223)

In another verse, which is one of the earliest revelations: "Clean your garments," (AlMudassir 5)

In the current process of the pandemic, how much importance [personal and public] hygiene carries for our health has been revealed. As a result, it's very important to pay attention to personal

cleanliness in the time of the pandemic. Many Ahadith begin with a section called "The Book on Purification", referring to the rules of personal cleanliness. "Cleanliness is half of faith," the Prophet said in one of his well-known hadiths.

Islam's emphasis on cleanliness and its anti-pandemic rules could make a serious difference for Muslims to protect themselves from the deadly pandemic. Islam does not endorse acts of ignorance

concerning cleanliness, which is particularly valid during the time of pandemics. In public places, our religion advises not to practice certain activities like coughing,

sneezing, speaking in a loud way and snuggling into someone else in a very close range, [where your germs could be passed from one to another],

In one of the hadiths, the companions of the Prophet Muhammed narrated: "When the Prophet would sneeze, he would cover his face with his hand or with his garment, and muffle the sound with it."

In times of epidemics or pandemics, Muslims and other believers of different faiths may need to pay more attention to Islamic rules and the Prophet Muhammed's subtle guidance concerning cleanliness. A good number of the verses of Holy Quran and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) provide the best guideline for human beings in order to enjoy the highest standard of personal hygiene than other people of the world.

May Almighty Guide us to follow these teachings and may the dreadfulness of this virus is over.



Pakistan's Penchant for Legislation in The Name of Islam Is the Result of Insecurity

By Yasser Latif Hamdani



The decision to build a temple and Shamshan Ghat for the Hindu community in Islamabad is no doubt a praiseworthy decision but in the larger scheme it does nothing to undo the theocratic nature of the state that exists under the current constitution in its present form. As I have argued several times in this space, Pakistan is a theocratic state because it creates distinctions between citizen and citizen in Pakistan. By barring Non-Muslims from becoming president or prime minister, it also allows the state to determine who a Muslim is. Those who argue that by opening a temple in the capital Jinnah's promise on 11 August 1947 has been fulfilled miss the point completely. The "free to go to your temples" bit in that speech is only a small part of that vision. Other parts of that speech include the idea that a citizen's religion is not the business of the state and that there would be no discrimination in the state on the basis of faith. The most important part of that speech is that in due course of time, religious identity would have no bearing on politics and that "Muslims will cease to be Muslims not in a religious sense, for that is the personal faith of an individual, but in political sense as citizens of the state." So building a temple in the Capital, while an admirable decision, does not fulfil the vision that Mr. Jinnah laid out before the country.

Even otherwise the existence of a theocracy in 21st Century is fraught with enormous difficulties and we see Pakistan's government being destabilised again and again by religious questions. Since 1953 religion has been used as a tool to bring down governments in Pakistan. The most recent example of this was how the PMLN was pushed against the wall in 2017 by the Faizabad Dharna. Today both the government and opposition are playing this politics again. The target of their ire is a tiny community, a forced minority, which has been demonized to an extent that the next step

may well be a planned genocide. Even during the pandemic politicians have been ratcheting up the rhetoric against them. Ironically even PMLN legislators – who were victims of this politics- are engaging in the same rhetoric to get back at the ruling party. Thus unending debates about religion continue to plague the country and this in turn has deflected attention from the government's abysmal performance on the issues that matter.

Every time the government finds itself in trouble, the rhetoric against this specific "minority" goes into overdrive. It is because this rhetoric sells, especially after the top down Islamisation of the 1980s. Our penchant for legislation in the name of Islam and fusion of religion and state is the result of a deep seated insecurity which does no one any good. The Pakistani population has been radicalized beyond redemption now and it is unlikely that we will be able to get out of this quagmire at least in our lifetimes. Report after report by independent international commissions on religious freedom point out the impunity with which the fundamental rights of religious minorities are trampled in Pakistan. We may point to India and the rise of fascist majoritarianism and rightly so but we must by the same token accept that India is still a long way to go before it catches up to Pakistan when it comes to systemic and constitutional discrimination against religious minorities. Let us also disabuse ourselves of the notion that Islam demands of us a theocratic order. The history of Islamic civilization is replete with examples of not just toleration but acceptance of other creeds. Islam does not ask for discrimination against others. Nor is the idea of an "Islamic Republic" an article of faith in Islam. Muslim political entities in history have by and large ignored religious questions. This is why Islamic law was not even codified till the idea gained popularity in the latter half of 20th Century.

Implicit within the theology of Islam is the idea of choice. No worldly authority can dictate to an individual how to live their private life or hold a religious belief and it is this fundamental principle that is accepted by Islam. Had this not been the case the Muslim world would not have produced thinkers and scientists like Avicenna and Rhazes, both of whom by the way were at best openly agnostic if not atheists. Yet despite this they were tolerated and even respected within the Muslim milieu. The same is true of Ibn-al-Haytham (the father of optics) and Al-Khawarizmi (the father of Algebra). These irreligious scientists and mathematicians together formed the Islamic golden age in which Muslims were known for science. Had the Muslim political entities in which they operated theocracies; they would have been put to death but they were not. There was no idea of "inquisition" in this Islamic golden age. Indeed, the very first inquisition in the Muslim world took place in Pakistan in 1974. We as a country have this dubious distinction of introducing a new innovation that hitherto was only associated with medieval Catholic and Protestant Churches and which idea had been abandoned by Christianity during the age of reason.

Therefore, it stands to reason that all our anxieties about safeguarding Islam in Pakistan do not find sanction in the classical Islamic doctrine. Our penchant for legislation in the name of Islam and fusion of religion and state is the result of a deep-seated insecurity which does no one any good. It does not serve any real cause of Islam. All it has done is retard the progress of this country and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Pakistan itself was created to safeguard the economic and political rights of the Muslim majority areas in the subcontinent, which feared marginalization by a Hindu dominated centre.

Its rationale was never to create a bigoted theocracy that persecutes minorities in the name of religion and nor was it to create a backward priest-ridden state that would thwart the progress of its citizens, overwhelming majority of whom are Muslims. Indeed, the theocratisation of Pakistan defeats the very rationale of Pakistan i.e. the economic uplift of what was a backward community fearing marginalization. Instead we have only achieved the marginalization of minorities in Pakistan by

relegating them to second, third and even fourth class citizens.

Yasser Latif Hamdani is an Advocate of the High Courts of Pakistan

<https://dailytimes.com.pk/633445/travails-of-a-theocracy/>



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MOHIUDDIN ABBASI
 Editor-in-chief

Disinterment of Infant Body: A Terrible & Vicious Act

By Mansoor Ahmad London



Islam is a peaceful religion which accords abundant respect to the dead bodies of all humans, but especially to the dead body of a Muslim. Generally one cannot exhume graves under Islamic Law. After a body has been buried, it is considered to be in the protection of the Law; so, disinterment is an act that is unlawful.

The disturbance or removal of an interred body is subject to the control and direction of the court.

The Law does not allow disinterment, based on the public policy that the sacredness of the grave should be maintained. Once buried, a body should not be



disturbed. A court would never normally command or allow a body to be disinterred unless there is a solid showing of requirement that disinterment is within the interests of justice. Each case is individually decided, based on its own particular facts and circumstances. Recently an extremely heinous and brutal incident which is in violation of human rights and human dignity took place at Ghatura village in Sahilpur Union of the Upazila of Brahmanbaria. According to the news sources published in the various newspapers of Bangladesh, it is evident that Swapna Akhter Begum, wife of Mohammad Saiful Islam, gave birth to a premature baby girl on 7th July 2020 at a Hospital in Brahmanbaria.

Noted here that Mohammad Saiful Islam is the son of Mohammad Rizwanul Haq, a Freedom

Fighter of Bangladesh Liberation War and currently serving as President of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Fazilpur under the District of Feni. In order to ensure special care and remove complications this premature baby was preserved in incubator.

The new born baby however could not stay alive and died at 5.30am on Thursday, the 9th July 2020. The dead body of the deceased baby was

taken to her maternal grandfather's village home at Ghatura and following religious rites was buried there at around 8.00am at the government-owned

graveyard in which all sects of Muslims including members of Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at had been buried for many years without any hindrance.

Soon after her burial, a group of fanatic Muslims clerics known as Mullahs spread anti-Ahmadiyya sentiment. Using loudspeakers these fanatic Mullahs started agitating people, exclaiming that they would not allow any Ahmadiyya members to be buried at the graveyard. Subsequently, some miscreants along with similar minded anti-Ahmadiyya people gathered at the graveyard and they dug up the body of the innocent new born baby from the grave and threw away it on the roadside outside the wall of the graveyard. At these adverse circumstances police were informed of the situation. But it is not a matter of great surprise shock that the police came at the situation

and did not take any action. The police superintendent remarked that they were investigating the matter and actions would be taken later. Compromising with the fanatic Mullahs, the police advised the members of the bereaved family to take away her dead body and burry at the Ahmadiyya Graveyard in Brahmanbaria. The members of the bereaved family had no alternative but to take the dead body and buried her there.

This is an upsetting incident and I cannot find the suitable words to describe the trauma, agony and distress of the bereaved Ahmadiyya family. In over 215 countries of the world the members of Ahmadiyya community are acknowledged and recognized as a peaceful, law abiding religious community members who are contributing momentarily in the nation building activities with NO political agenda. The condition of the Ahmadis is no different in Bangladesh. It is a population comprised of law-abiding and patriotic individuals who embrace both love for their faith and for their nation.

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states : 'Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance'.

The government of Bangladesh along with local administration must not show any type of gentleness or softness to any anarchy and disorder in the name of religion or religious feelings. Rather they must handle any such attempt of barbaric and cruel acts by fanatics with an iron fist, as most of the people living in Bangladesh, irrespective of their religious faith, believe in communal harmony, and we know that the extremists & miscreants are a minority. In order to ensure the human rights of all minorities, including Ahmadiyya, the incumbents definitely need to do something major as well to stop the overall activities of the fundamentalists

and bigots.

Only by taking strong action against the organizers of such atrocious and barbarous acts can the government uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens of the country (())

Mr. Ahmad is Member of Commonwealth Journalists Association (UK)



Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman

Contributions to Unani Medicine



By Zakaria Virk



Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman, Padma Shri

Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman has been making significant contributions to Unani medicine for more than sixty years. He has authored more than 54 books, 15 addresses, more than 150 research papers in national and international journals, hundreds of articles, wrote prefaces and edited scores of books. He also owns the largest collection of books on Unani medicine. He has devoted his life to medieval medicine and medicine in medieval Islam. He is recipient of 23 awards and honors. In recognition of his selfless services Government of India conferred on him with Padma Shri award in 2006. Recently he was awarded First Sheikh Zayed International Award for TCAM 2020 in the category of Unani Medicine. Currently he is honorary treasurer of AMU. Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman was born in 1940 in Bhopal. His ancestral home is Tijara (Elore). He inherited practice of Greek medicine from his forefathers. His grandfather Hakim Sayed Karam Husain, his elder brother Hakim Sayed Atiq al-Qadir, & father Hakim Sayed Fazlu ar-Rahman operated a clinic and composed books all their life. After graduating from Nadwatu al-Ulema Lucknow, in 1955 he enrolled himself in a medical course at Tibbiya College, Aligarh Muslim University. After his graduation in 1960 until 31st July 1961 he worked as a house physician & then August 1961 to 31st April 1963 he worked as a demonstrator at Tibbiya College. From September 1963 to June 1970 he was a lecturer at Jamia Tibbiya Dehli. In November 1962 he established a medical academy in Bhopal which was subsequently transferred to

Dehli. Under the auspices of this academy two books *Tarikh Elm Tashreeh* and *Elm al-Amraz* were published. He started the publication of a monthly journal *al-Hikmat* which was published regularly from June 1965 to September 1970. In the presidential elections of Tibbi Conference in the state of Dehli he won three times. As its president he organized a Tibbi conference in Dehli. On 13th June 1970 he was appointed Research Officer in the literary research unit of Central Council for Research in Indian Medicine & Homeopathy, Aligarh Muslim University. On January 1st, 1972 he was appointed Reader in the department of pharmacology Ajmal Khan Tibbiya College, Aligarh; subsequently he became professor in the same department on 1st January 1983. On 19th December 1978 he became head of the department of pharmacology. On 5th March 1981 he completed his 5th term as president. From 1988 -1990 he served as dean in the Faculty of Greek Medicine, Aligarh. In June 2002 he retired from AMU. He became member of the AMU Court first time in 1984, later member of the Academic Council as well as the Court several times. He had developed a passion for medicine & in the study of intellectual history of Muslims from his student days. Those Muslim scholars who made significant contributions in the history of Islamic arts and sciences, Ibn Sena was a towering figure among them whose intellectual pursuits left an indelible mark on him. He corrected & translated *Elm al-ahwal wal-Asbab wal-Alamat* – part of *Kitab al-Qanoon fil Tibb* called *Elm al-Amraz*. This book was published by Tibbi Academy Dehli in 1969. Later it was published twice by Tibbi Academy, Aligarh in 1990 & 1994. Long before his retirement from Aligarh Muslim University, he planned the expansion of Tibbi Academy in 2000, naming it after Ibn Sena. On 20th April 2001 the new building of Ibn Sena Academy was inaugurated by vice-chancellor of AMU Muhammad Hamid Ansari (former Vice President of India 2007-2017). Author of this article had the opportunity to visit this academy in November 2013 and delivered a lecture.

This academy is not only dedicated to Ibn Sena, rather there is a section allocated to Ibn Sena. Besides huge selection of books on science and medicine, there are books of literature, biographies of Ghalib, Iqbal and other literary giants. It is estimated that there are close to 1000 rare manuscripts, 17,000 magazines and journals, and 25,000 books in Urdu, English, Persian, Arabic & Sanskrit. Attached to the academy are two museums – one on science & medicine and the other on Muslim culture and civilization. Artifacts about these have been preserved in these museums. The academy has been regularly holding every year Ibn Sena Memorial lectures since 2006. He actively took part in the establishment of Beenapara College Azamgarh. Not only the foundation stone was laid by him, but due to his passionate interest in the life of Prince of Physicians he had this college named after Ibn Sena.

He had an abiding interest in the study of history of medicine. This is evident from his momentous books: Tadhkira Khandan Azizi, Tarikh Elm Tashreeh, Safavi ahad mein elm Tashreeh ka mutale'a, Hayat Karam Husain, Azizi family of physicians, Dehli and tibbey Unani, Aa'eena Tarikh Tibb, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Tadhkira A'ttiba Asr. Finding old manuscripts is in fact tracing one's heritage. Our artistic, intellectual and cultural needs are connected to them. To conserve our intellectual heritage, this is a vital task. Manuscripts of AMU, Risala Nabeez, Tibbe-e-feroz Shahi, Risala Atriyaal, Asma al-adwiyaa, Jawamy Kitab al-Nabz sagheer, Risala fee auj'a al-Qars, Aynal al-Hayat, Risala fee Farq al-Tibb, Kitab fee al-Anasir, and Kitab fee al-Mazaj were all corrected, & edited by him. By virtue of this many monumental treatises of Hindi, Arabic and Greek have been preserved which are not only important for reference but as a subject as well. He composed a biography of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan's grandson entitled in 2011 'Ross Masood'. The personality of Sir Ross Masood (1889-1937), his contributions with regards to AMU is a bright chapter of national history of Indian Muslims. This book is a token of his unbounded love for Sir Syed, Muslim interest in education, & especially author's roots in Aligarh. In order to participate in medical & history of medicine conferences the world over he has travelled to many countries of Asia and Europe. These countries include Iran, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Malaysia, UAE, Brunei, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Syria,

Jordan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Germany, Spain, England, Scotland, Greece, and Holland & Australia. As advisor of WHO he stayed for three months in Bangladesh. During his 10 travels to Iran he visited many cities and historical places. He has documented his observations in two travlogues Safarnama Bangladesh and Iran-nama.

To protect the rights of Unani physicians, it was necessary to organize them. From student days he was involved in the activities of medical movement. As district president, president of states of Dehli and Uttar Pradesh he was actively involved in All India Unani Tibbi Conference. For his meritorious services to Persian language and medical literature he was awarded a certificate of honors by President of India on Independence Day 15 Aug. 1995. Five books have been written on his life and monumental achievements. (1) Prof Syed Hasan Abbas and Prof Abd al-Latif Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman hayat –wa-khidmat (2) Hakim Fakhar Alam Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman ek mutal'eya (3) Dr Ayesha Kafil Syed Zillur Rahman in light of articles (4) Alam Naqvi - Nuqoosh Zillur Rahman (5) This year 2020 his new biography has been published from Aligarh composed by Aziz Bilgrami – Syed Zillur Rahman – ek Naqshe-e-Javedan. Professor Zillur Rahman is actively involved in the promotion of Unani medicine even now at an advance age. He has been travelling all over, for instance in February 2020 he attended 4th International conference on Prophetic medicine in Abu Dhabi, where he was conferred First Sheikh Zayed International Award for TCAM 2020 in the category of Unani Medicine. He Chaired, Plenary Hakim Abdul Hameed Memorial Session on Unani Medicine, held at Jamia Hamdard March 2020. He presided First Rasheed Ahmad Siddiqui Memorial Oration, Department of Urdu, AMU. He Presided over Celebration Ceremony on Haj House, Festivity Farm House, Ghaziabad. He Attended, Executive Committee Meeting, Anjuman Tarraqi Urdu (Hind), Urdu Ghar, New Delhi, on 13.3.2020. He Guest of Honour, the International Conference on Recent Advances in Engineering & Science (ICRAES) AMU. A welcome reception was arranged by Majlis Iqbal at Nasim Ansari Hall of Munshi Hussain Khan Technical Institute ITC, Bhopal, in honour of Hakim Syed Zillur Rahman on his visit to Bhopal 15 -21 March 2020.

(Newsletter of Ibn Sena Academy, Issue # 77)



UK: Archbishop of Canterbury says portrayal of Jesus as White should be reconsidered



Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury and head of the Church of England, has said the church should reconsider its portrayal of Jesus as a White man.

Speaking to the BBG Today Programme, Welby was asked whether the way the western church "portrays Jesus" needed to be "thought about again" and "re-imagined" in light of recent Black Lives Matter protests following the death of George Floyd. "Yes, of course it does," he said, adding that Jesus was portrayed differently in countries around the world. He was regularly in touch with Anglican Church leaders from around the world, he said, who did not portray Jesus as White.

"You go into their churches and you don't see a White Jesus -- you see a Black Jesus, or Chinese Jesus, or a Middle Eastern Jesus -- which is of course the most accurate.

"You see a Fijian Jesus -- you see Jesus portrayed in as many ways as there are cultures, languages and understandings."

Welby added that the representations of Jesus were not, however, "who we worship" but rather

served as a "reminder of the universality of the God who became fully human."

Britain's imperialist monuments face a bitter reckoning amid Black Lives Matter protests

Addressing calls for monuments with links to the UK's imperialist history and slave trade to be removed, he said statues in Canterbury Cathedral would be put under review.

"We're going to be looking very carefully, and putting them in context and seeing if they all should be there," he said.

"The question [about whether they should all be there] arises, of course it does, and we've seen that all over the world."

The movement to take down and deface controversial statues has gained traction in the UK, as well as Europe and the US but has divided public opinion -- with critics slamming it as "mob rule" while others applaud it as a way of addressing "systematic racism".

<https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/27/uk/justin-welby-jesus-scli-intl-gbr/index.html>



Russia report: UK considers tougher security laws after criticism by MPs

Ministers are considering strengthening security laws after a report by MPs accused them of underestimating the threat of Russian interference.



Russia has dismissed the report as Russophobia

Home Office Minister James Brokenshire said foreign agents could be required to register in the UK in future. He told MPs that this and other "new offences and powers" for dealing with foreign spies were being looked at. Labour's Sir Keir Starmer accused the government of complacency and leaving a "serious gap in our defences". Speaking at Prime Minister's Questions, Sir Keir said the government had "delayed" legislation to help counter Russian interference, despite acknowledging 18 months ago that existing powers were insufficient. "The PM sat on this report for 10 months and failed to plug a gap in our law in national security," he said. "How is the PM going to address that gap and meet the threat with the joined-up, robust response it deserves?"

Boris Johnson said there was no other country in the Western world that was more "vigilant" about Russian interference, pointing to recent sanctions against Russian officials involved in human rights abuses and proposed laws to protect critical infrastructure and intellectual property. "Let us be in no doubt about what this is all about," he said. "It is about pressure from the Islingtonian remainers who have seized on this report to try and give the impression that Russian interference was somehow responsible for Brexit. "The people of this country did not vote to leave the EU because of pressure from Russia." The Intelligence and Security Committee report claimed the

government made no effort to investigate claims of Russian interference in the EU referendum and criticised intelligence agencies for not prioritising the issue. The government has said an inquiry is not necessary as it has "seen no evidence of successful interference".

'Additional powers'

But ministers are listening to calls from all parties to do more to counter Russian espionage and subversion after the UK was described the main target after the US and Nato. Plans to make foreign agents register were mentioned in the government's legislative agenda last December, and were previously announced by former home secretary Sajid Javid in May last year. In response to an urgent question from Labour in the House of Commons, Mr Brokenshire said the UK would consider strengthening the Official Secrets Act and tightening rules on investment visas. "Let there be no doubt, we are unafraid to act where necessary to protect the UK and our allies." Whether deliberate or deficient, the Intelligence and Security Committee's very long-awaited report outlines gaping holes in the UK's handling of the threat from Russia. For years, it seems a lack of priority, and a lack of curiosity, allowed the risks to go unmonitored, if not to go unchecked. The UK government has now stiffened its attitude to Putin's Russia. But shadow home secretary Nick Thomas-Symonds said the "conscious" decision not to consider whether there was any attempt to manipulate the Brexit vote spoke volumes. Urging ministers to treat the issue with the "seriousness it deserves", he added: "I thank the security services for the work they do but they need help. This report makes clear they have not received the strategic support, legislative tools or resources necessary to defend our interests."

In its 50-page report, the ISC said the UK was "clearly a target" for disinformation campaigns

around its elections, but that the issue was described as a "hot potato", with no one organisation taking a lead to tackle it. The committee suggested a new Espionage Act could help prevent individuals acting on behalf of a foreign power from concealing their links with that country. It said an obligation similar to that in the US - where agents are required to register with the Justice department - would "clearly be valuable in countering Russian influence in the UK". ISC member Kevan Jones said he was concerned that the Law Commission, which was asked last year to look at the legal issues regarding

such a move, had yet to release its findings.

"Can I urge the minister to make sure we actually gets this legislation in place because it is needed," he said. "Let's hope it is not just some spin to get the headlines." Downing Street was accused of holding back the ISC report ahead of December's UK election and for delaying its nominations to set up the new committee - both claims it has denied. Its chair Julian Lewis, who was stripped of the Conservative whip after defying No 10 by standing for its leadership, sought reassurances that Downing Street special advisers would not be able to interfere with its work. ❀❀❀

Pakistani born scientist becomes first woman to head Max Planck Society



KARACHI: Pakistan-born scientist Dr Asifa Akhtar has become the first international female vice president of the biology and medicine section at Germany's prestigious Max Planck Society.

The Max Planck Society is Germany's most successful research organization. Since its establishment in 1948, no fewer than 18 Nobel laureates have emerged from the ranks of its scientists, putting it on a par with the best and most prestigious research institutions worldwide.

During her term of office, Ms Akhtar will be in charge of the institutes of the sections and will also be the contact person for the Max Planck Schools.

"My heart beats for the young scientists," the society's website quoted Akhtar as saying. "Academic science is a beautiful example of integration because you have people from all over the world exchanging knowledge beyond boundaries, cultures or prejudice," she told the

society in an interview. As the vice president, Ms Akhtar also wants to advance the issue of gender equality. "Gender equality needs to be worked on continuously. There are outstanding women in science and we should make all the efforts and use our resources to win them for the Max Planck Society," she said. To enable gender diversity in various career domains, she said, the society needed to be more accommodating and understanding. "If we want women to progress in science, we need to enable practical solutions such as childcare and time-sharing or home office options," she added. Born in Karachi, she obtained her doctorate at the Imperial Cancer Research Fund in London, UK, in 1997. She then moved to Germany, where she was a Postdoctoral fellow at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) in Heidelberg and the Adolf-Butenandt-Institute in Munich from 1998 to 2001. Ms Akhtar was awarded the Early Career European Life Science Organisation Award in 2008, EMBO membership in 2013, and the Feldberg Prize in 2017. She was also elected as a member of the National Academy of Science Leopoldina in 2019.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1569093/pakistan-born-scientist-becomes-first-woman-to-head-section-at-renowned-body>



American Exit from Afghanistan

By I.A. Rahman

INDEED, the American counterterrorism and nation-building project in Afghanistan — much like the Soviet and British imperial forays in the past — has been an unmitigated disaster. While the US invaded Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11 ostensibly to hunt down Al Qaeda and punish the Afghan Taliban that sheltered the transnational terrorist conglomerate, today, nearly two decades on, while Al Qaeda may be scattered, the Taliban are very much in the ascendant.

And while Washington has lost over 2,400 personnel and spent hundreds of billions of dollars on the effort, there is not much to show for it as the Afghan government and military are widely seen as incapable of running and securing the country once their Western sponsors depart. In such circumstances, and considering it is an election year in America, President Donald Trump's haste to 'bring the boys back home' can be understood. But as a trilateral communiqué jointly issued by Pakistan, Afghanistan and China on Tuesday warned, America's rush to get up and leave before an intra-Afghan peace agreement is in place can pave the way for the resurgence of terrorist groups.

The broad consensus is that if the US and other Western forces leave without an agreement between Afghan stakeholders, the chaos that ensued after the Soviet withdrawal may be repeated. That is why the three sides "urged for an orderly, responsible and condition-based withdrawal of the foreign troops from Afghanistan..." While the Afghan government would have a tough time maintaining peace in a post-withdrawal

scenario, Pakistan and China also have legitimate security concerns, specifically if terrorist groups use Afghanistan as a launching pad to destabilise the region.

While the post-Soviet period saw rival Mujahideen warlords battle each other as well as the government in Kabul, this time there are far more bloodthirsty players waiting in the wings, namely

the local chapter of the self-styled Islamic State group. If foreign forces were to beat a hasty retreat, the government in Kabul — a weak construct riven



by ethnic and tribal rivalries — would be faced with the gargantuan task of fending off the Taliban, IS and other militant groups alone.

There was a ray of hope when the US and Afghan Taliban signed a peace agreement in Doha earlier this year. However, there has been no workable counterpart agreement between the government in Kabul and Afghan factions, principally the Taliban, which is a recipe for disaster. The main issue is the massive gulf of mistrust between Kabul and the Taliban; there is the prickly question of prisoner exchanges between the two sides, while the Taliban continue to hammer government forces. Both the Afghan government and the Taliban need to reconsider their rigid positions for the sake of their country. On its part, the US must realise that while its exit is long overdue, a messy, hasty withdrawal will only add to Afghanistan's problems.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1567875/american-exit>



USA: Miss Muslimah USA, a pageant for young Muslim women- sparkling red grape juice and halal magic

By Liana Aghajanian



bore the brunt of discrimination against Muslims, a diverse population estimated to number more than three million in the United States. President Trump — a former pageant-world figure himself — has inflamed Islamophobia in the nation, through his rhetoric and by banning migration from several majority-Muslim

Last year, on a Thursday in June, long before live events and large gatherings bore the threat of contagion, the ballroom of the Ford Community and Performing Arts Center in Dearborn, Mich., was in full pageant form. Pink mini cupcakes filled the dessert table. A disco ball hung from the ceiling, spinning subtly as the D.J. set the mood with music. Seats for guests were draped in shiny gold fabric. Wine however, was swapped for Welch's sparkling red grape juice. The talent portion of the evening was made up entirely of readings from the Quran. A magician performed what he jokingly called "halal magic." The musical act performed Muslim hip-hop.

For a century, the beauty pageant has embedded itself in the cultural identity of America. Miss Muslimah USA offers a fresh take on the well-worn event format, one that lies at the intersection of American cultural identity and religious freedom at a time when both seem to be in flux. The pageant has given Muslim women, particularly those who wear the hijab, the chance to participate in an American rite on their own terms, without having to compromise their faith. (Its motto: "promoting modesty and inner beauty.") It was created by Maghrib Shahid, a 39-year-old Black Muslim mother and modest clothing designer from Columbus, Ohio. As a hijabi, a Muslim woman who wears a head scarf, Ms. Shahid felt that she and other women like her

countries. "We're visibly Muslim, it's us who will be attacked first," Ms. Shahid said. "I wanted to give Muslim women the opportunity to change misconceptions about themselves."

Halima Yasin Abdullahi, 23, who was crowned in the first Miss Muslimah pageant in 2017, said that two years on, she still feels its impact. "I've gained a really strong and consistent confidence in myself, and learned to appreciate my flaws," she said. "This is me. This is how I was born." To enter Miss Muslimah USA, contestants must be practicing Muslims aged 17 to 30, a range established after the first pageant, which accepted contestants up to 40 years of age. There's a \$250 registration fee and a screening process. Once they are enrolled, they can prepare to compete in five categories: abayah (a loose, robe-like dress), burkini (a swimsuit that covers the whole body), modest special occasion dress (dresses that are too tight could lead to disqualification) and talent, which may be a spoken word poem or a Quran recitation. Contestants must also answer this question: "If you were crowned Miss Muslimah USA, how would you use that title to change misconceptions about Muslim women in the world?"

The winner holds the Miss Muslimah USA title for a year, signs a contract to abide by certain codes of conduct, is managed by the organization and walks in a show at an annual fashion convention

hosted by Perfect for Her, a modest wear brand. Ms. Shahid helps the winner navigate sponsorships and fashion bookings. The first pageant was advertised to include a \$5,000 prize for the winner. Subsequent pageants have not offered monetary rewards, though Ms. Shahid's hope is to offer scholarships in the future. Running the pageant on a shoestring budget by herself, Ms. Shahid dipped into her savings to bring Halima Aden, a Somali-American model, to Columbus for the first Miss Muslimah USA. Ms. Aden was the first contestant to wear a hijab in the Miss Minnesota pageant in 2016, and went on to become the first woman to wear a hijab and burkini in Sports Illustrated, in 2019. "It's not about becoming rich or wealthy. It's about making a true difference, a real impact," Ms. Shahid said. "I want people to really benefit from this. I want to change your life. I want to change your soul."

Her passion for pageants began in childhood; she told herself that someday she would enter a competition. "As I got older, I realized, I don't see anybody like me — who looks like me and the way I dress," she said. "It became a distant dream."

Backstage last July, the contestants strapped on heels, adjusted the gowns they had modified with sleeves and high necklines, and helped one another tuck in their scarves before being called onstage. Andrea Rahal, 30, whose sister Amanda and cousin Amal were helping her into a silver sequined gown and white hijab, was one of them. Born to Lebanese parents and raised in Dearborn, home to one of the largest Arab-American populations in the country, Ms. Rahal has worn a hijab since she was 8. She now works as a phlebotomist and medical assistant, and is a single mother of two. Ms. Rahal rallied her community around last year's pageant. She found 30 sponsors for the event and convinced Ms. Shahid to move the event from Columbus to Dearborn. "When I found Miss Muslimah, I never thought an opportunity like that would pop up," Ms. Rahal said. "It was always a dream for me to be part of a pageant, so when something comes your way, always take the risk and take the chance." The contestants strutted down the catwalk in their gowns one by one. Karter Zaher, a former member

of Deen Squad, a popular Muslim hip-hop group, sang the hit song "Cover Girl" (which includes lines such as "she represents peace and got her own voice, she's not forced to wear it cos' she made her own choice" and "she rocks the head scarf like the mother of Jesus"). Wearing their gowns, the women moved on to recite their speeches, which touched on Islamophobia, feminism, self-care and the desire to be seen as multidimensional people in American society. "I am a Muslim feminist," Zeytuna Mohamed, a 22-year-old nursing student from Des Moines, said onstage. "Many people think that those two words are incompatible, but I am here to prove you wrong. I am not oppressed. I am not passive, and I am certainly not caged."

Umuhani Abdullahi, 20 and representing Kentucky, said in her speech: "This is my home, America. This is the only home that I know right now. I passionately dream of seeing girls like me in fashion books, on billboards, in Coca-Cola advertisements and obviously in movies. Hopefully Netflix."

Just like several American beauty pageants, Miss Muslimah has had its share of shake-ups while attempting to establish itself as a legitimate organization. In 2017, Dr. Khadijah Ismael, 42, won the first pageant, in which she ran on a platform of knocking down stereotypes about Muslim women. After winning, she traveled on a speaking tour which she paid for. But disagreements between Dr. Ismael and the Miss Muslimah organization arose, and a month before her reign was over she was informed that she was disqualified. Contractual issues caused Rahma Mohamed, who was crowned the winner in 2019, and Miss Muslimah USA to part ways. Ms. Mohamed, a 17-year-old from Wisconsin who is studying mechanical engineering, was a semifinalist in the Miss Wisconsin Teen USA pageant and later went on to represent her state in Miss Teen World America. She was the first Muslim to place in the competition.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/04/style/muslim-beauty-pageant-miss-muslimah-usa.html?action=click&module=Features&pgtype=Homepage>



Sweden Has Become the World's Cautionary Tale

By Peter Goodman



"They literally gained nothing," said Jacob F. Kirkegaard, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington. "It's a self-inflicted wound, and they have no economic gains."

LONDON — Ever since the coronavirus emerged in Europe, Sweden has captured international attention by conducting an unorthodox, open air experiment. It has allowed the world to examine what happens in a pandemic when a government allows life to carry on largely unhindered. This is what has happened: Not only have thousands more people died than in neighboring countries that imposed lockdowns, but Sweden's economy has fared little better.

The results of Sweden's experience are relevant well beyond Scandinavian shores. In the United States, where the virus is spreading with alarming speed, many states have — at President Trump's urging — avoided lockdowns or lifted them prematurely on the assumption that this would foster economic revival, allowing people to return to workplaces, shops and restaurants.

In Britain, Prime Minister Boris Johnson — previously hospitalized with Covid-19 — reopened pubs and restaurants last weekend in a bid to restore normal economic life.

Implicit in these approaches is the assumption that governments must balance saving lives against the imperative to spare jobs, with the extra health risks of rolling back social distancing potentially justified by a resulting boost to

prosperity. But Sweden's grim result — more death, and nearly equal economic damage — suggests that the supposed choice between lives and paychecks is a false one: A failure to impose social distancing can cost lives and jobs at the same time.

Sweden put stock in the sensibility of its people as it largely avoided imposing government prohibitions. The government allowed restaurants, gyms, shops, playgrounds and most schools to remain open. By contrast, Denmark and Norway opted for strict quarantines, banning large groups and locking down shops and restaurants.

More than three months later, the coronavirus is blamed for 5,420 deaths in Sweden, according to the World Health Organization. That might not sound especially horrendous compared with the more than 129,000 Americans who have died. But Sweden is a country of only 10 million people. Per million people, Sweden has suffered 40 percent more deaths than the United States, 12 times more than Norway, seven times more than Finland and six times more than Denmark.

The elevated death toll resulting from Sweden's approach has been clear for many weeks. What is only now emerging is how Sweden, despite letting its economy run unimpeded, has still suffered business-destroying, prosperity-diminishing damage, and at nearly the same magnitude of its neighbors.

Sweden's central bank expects its economy to contract by 4.5 percent this year, a revision from a previously expected gain of 1.3 percent. The unemployment rate jumped to 9 percent in May from 7.1 percent in March. "The overall damage to the economy means the recovery will be protracted, with unemployment remaining elevated," Oxford Economics concluded in a recent research note.

This is more or less how damage caused by the pandemic has played out in Denmark, where the central bank expects that the economy will shrink 4.1 percent this year, and where joblessness has edged up to 5.6 percent in May from 4.1 percent in March. In short, Sweden suffered a vastly higher death rate while failing to collect on the expected economic gains.

The coronavirus does not stop at national borders. Despite the government's decision to allow the domestic economy to roll on, Swedish businesses are stuck with the same conditions that produced recession everywhere else. And Swedish people responded to the fear of the virus by limiting their shopping — not enough to prevent elevated deaths, but enough to produce a decline in business activity.

Here is one takeaway with potentially universal import: It is simplistic to portray government actions such as quarantines as the cause of economic damage. The real culprit is the virus itself. From Asia to Europe to the Americas, the risks of the pandemic have disrupted businesses while prompting people to avoid shopping malls and restaurants, regardless of official policy.

"The Swedish manufacturing sector shut down when everyone else shut down because of the supply chain situation," he said. "This was entirely predictable." What remained in the government's sphere of influence was how many people would die.

"There is just no questioning and no willingness from the Swedish government to really change tack, until it's too late," Mr. Kirkegaard said. "Which is astonishing, given that it's been clear for quite some time that the economic gains that they claim to have gotten from this are just nonexistent."

Norway, on the other hand, was not only quick to impose an aggressive lockdown, but early to relax it as the virus slowed, and as the government ramped up testing. It is now expected to see a more rapid economic turnaround. Norway's central predicts that its mainland economy — excluding the turbulent oil and gas sector — will contract by 3.9



Per million people, Sweden has suffered 40 percent more coronavirus-related deaths than the United States.Credit...Jonathan Nackstrand/Agence France-Presse

percent this year. That amounts to a marked improvement over the 5.5 percent decline expected in the midst of the lockdown.

Sweden's laissez faire approach does appear to have minimized the economic damage compared with its neighbors in the first three months of the year, according to an assessment by the International Monetary Fund. But that effect has worn off as the force of the pandemic has swept through the global economy, and as Swedish consumers have voluntarily curbed their shopping anyway.

Researchers at the University of Copenhagen gained access to credit data from Danske Bank, one of the largest in Scandinavia. They studied spending patterns from mid-March, when Denmark put the clamps on the economy, to early April. The pandemic prompted Danes to reduce their spending 29 percent in that period, the study concluded. During the same weeks, consumers in Sweden — where freedom reigned — reduced their spending 25 percent.

Strikingly, older people — those over 70 — reduced their spending more in Sweden than in Denmark, perhaps concerned that the business-as-usual circumstances made going out especially risky.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/07/business/sweden-economy-coronavirus.html>



Nudrat E Piracha - first Pakistani woman to earn Doctorate of Juridical Science

USA: Dr Nudrat E. Piracha has become the first female lawyer from Pakistan to earn a Doctorate of Juridical Science. Abbreviated as SJD and equivalent to a research doctorate, the qualification is considered the most advanced degree in law. It is awarded primarily in the United States to candidates with exceptional academic and professional credentials. Dr Piracha is one of the few women across the globe to have earned the qualification. She is also the first Pakistani woman to be appointed as a member of an Ad Hoc Committee of the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes, and the first Pakistani lawyer to become a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators in the UK.

For 17 years, Piracha has practiced in the largely male-dominated field of international commercial arbitration and construction and investment disputes, representing the Government of Pakistan and many prominent international corporations. An alumna of the London School of Economics and Political Science, Piracha comes from a family of civil servants in Pakistan — two of her sisters and her father have all served in various government agencies. Expected to join civil services like her sisters, Piracha decided to go into

law instead, partly because it was among the limited careers permitted by her family. “I was also inspired by the role played by lawyers in the development of countries,” Piracha

recalled. “When I started studying law, I came to appreciate its interconnectivity with development issues and immense power to touch the lives of others.” She began her career in Islamabad, where she rose to partnership at a leading law firm, Samdani and Qureshi, before receiving a Fulbright scholarship for George Washington University School of Law. The interplay of law and policymaking mesmerized Piracha, who sees immense potential for social and political change in Pakistan through legal reforms. But when she started her career as an intern, she quickly realized that the Pakistani court was largely a man’s world.

<https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/681514-dr-nudrat-e-piracha-becomes-first-female-pakistani-lawyer-to-earn-sjd>



Saudi Fencer wins Gold Medal

RIYADH — Mashaal Al-Khayal, a member of the Saudi national fencing team, bagged a gold medal in the Virtual Fencing Intercontinental Epee Cup. Saudi Arabia’s Nada Abed came third with the bronze medal in the seven-day event, which was organized by the Panamerican Fencing Confederation. A total of 150 players from various parts of the world participated in the virtual championship. Bolivian fencer Louise Maria Bastos came second with the silver medal in the



event.

It is noteworthy that Saudi Arabia’s Modawi Al-Khayyal and Sheikha Al-Dossary have won gold and silver medals in the second virtual fencing championship held in the first week of July.



Islam, Science and the Muslim Predicament

By Arshad Alam India



Ibn Sina, the ace scientist and philosopher of the medieval world, was a deeply religious man. It is said about him that he could master the works of Aristotle only with great difficulty. It took no less than forty attempts for Ibn Sina to decode the essence of what Aristotle was arguing. Faced with much mental agony during deconstructing Aristotle, Ibn Sina only found solace in prayers. He had no fixed time for offering his prayers: whenever he got stuck with Aristotle, he would immerse himself in remembering God.

Prayers were not just therapeutic but this submission to God also opened for him newer possibilities of understanding the finer merits within Aristotelian worldview. For him, there was no separation between religion and science, both being equally valid paths to know the ultimate reality. In fact, he hardly ever thought that the two different paths leading to the same destination. For him, inquiring about essences and causes of the material world was part of doing religious work itself. Today, Muslims make a fundamental distinction between the world of science and Islam. They think that science is about this world whereas Islam is about the eternal world and life on this earth is to prepare oneself for that eternal world. It is not a surprise then that the Muslims have hardly made any scientific contribution to the

modern world. Partly, the reason has to do with our distrust of science and how some of its fundamental tenets run contrary to the teachings of our holy book. The fact remains that it was only through Ibn Sina's commentaries that the western world discovered Greek thought which eventually led to the Enlightenment and ultimately changed the very face of Europe. Thus, modern science and philosophy do not belong to any particular religion, rather it is the common heritage of all religions. Muslims make the fundamental mistake of coupling science within a kind of 'westernism' which is contra-factual. The result of this revulsion has done immense harm to the Muslim world. In the Indian subcontinent, its effect could be seen in the curriculum of Deoband madrasa. Established in 1867, this madrasa and later a school of thought banished all of science, applied science and philosophy from its syllabus which is called the Dars e Nizami.

However, this nomenclature was nothing but a fraud for the simple reason Dars e Nizami was a syllabus which predated the establishment of Deoband. It was basically a state curriculum and was taught in state supported madrasas like the Firangi Mahal at Lucknow which taught both manqulat (revealed knowledge) and Maqulat (rational knowledge). Thus, the study of law,

applied science, philosophy and religion was all done under one roof. Students were free to choose a branch of study depending on their intellectual proclivities. This syllabus produced judges, court officials, architects and Ulama in equal measure.

Deoband killed the very soul of Dars e Nizami. It banished the study of all rational content from the syllabus, and substituted them with the study of Quran and Hadis, thus reducing knowledge to religious studies alone. Indeed, its founders were quite clear that rational studies only add to the 'confusion of the mind' and therefore there was no need of teaching either philosophy or science.

This way of thinking was not just influenced by the colonial separation between the 'religious' and the

'modern' but also by the Ashari intellectuals like Ghazali who in his 'Incoherence of the Philosophers' had labelled such knowledge systems as 'Kufr'. Ghazali is perhaps the most important cause why millions of Muslim children today are being brought up with a geocentric worldview. The march of scientific knowledge has been relentless, dismantling many false gods on its way. Unable to cope up and ignore the salience of this demonstrative branch of knowledge, some Muslims devised a novel way to appropriate it and started a project called the 'Islamization of science'. In practice, there are two ways in which this 'Islamic science' is being done today. The first is a very crude attempt to claim all scientific achievements as Islamic either by linking all discoveries to an Islamic influence or by claiming that discoveries by Muslim scientists were fundamental to the constitution of modern science. Largely a nostalgic attempt, this approach does not answer the fundamental dissociation between science and the Muslim mind today. The second way to do Islamic science

is to spiritualise science, which is to say that there are some truths which are not known by science and therefore one has to accept the limits of modern science. The problem with this approach is the a-priori assumption about the existence of some higher Truth which in all certainly can never be approximated by science. The other problem with this approach is that when faced with contradictory claims between science and Islam, one has to choose Islam despite ample proofs to the contrary. Ultimately, if this problem has to be resolved, then Muslims have to come terms with the fact that divine revelations may not be so

divine after all. If one assumes that each and every word of the Quran is beyond doubt, then one cannot do any kind of

science, far less 'Islamic science'.

Muslim philosophers anticipated this problem long back and have argued for levels of knowledge, the most important being that branch of knowledge which is demonstrable or empirical. In case there is a conflict between the sacred text and demonstrable knowledge, then it is the latter which should be taken as the truth. To get over the problem of the divinity of sacred text, Ibn Arabi for example argued that most of the verses in the Quran were allegorical in nature which lends itself to multiple meanings and therefore one can never be sure of the real meaning which it is trying to convey. Under such circumstances, it is only prudent to look forward to logic and empiricism as sources of valid knowledge. If only Muslims would have taken forward their earlier wisdom, the world would have been a different place today.

<https://www.newageislam.com/islam-and-science/arshad-alam,-new-age-islam/islam,-science-and-the-muslim-predicament/d/122174>



Sharia Finances Are Being Used to Bolster American Islamist Organizations



Sheikh Yusuf Al Qaradawi has issued several fatwas, or Islamic rulings, related to obligatory alms-giving, and he has certified CAIR as eligible for these donations.

By Len Getz

Egyptian Islamic scholar known for his militant religious edicts and jihadist tendencies. Qaradawi has joined other Islamist clerics in blessing CAIR as zakah eligible under the fi sabilillah category, and CAIR has enthusiastically accepted his endorsement.

Thanks in part to this support, CAIR-Philadelphia solicited its patrons daily for donations during the final 10 days of this year's Ramadan. Meanwhile, Azzad Asset Management is helping CAIR squeeze the

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), considered a terrorist organization by the United Arab Emirates with at least seven of its affiliates tied to terror-related crimes, is partnering with an Islamist wealth management firm whose chief adviser on Sharia (Islamic law) supports suicide bombings.

CAIR-Philadelphia is teaming up with Azzad Asset Management, an Islamic finance company that advises its clients to pursue "faith-based, socially responsible investment" strategies. In practice, Azzad directs Muslim American wealth to Islamist pet projects and organizations, including CAIR, and the pair plan to hold a workshop in June focused on Islamic tithing.

One of the pillars of Islam is zakah, or charitable giving, an annual religious duty that derives extra spiritual rewards for Muslims who donate during the month of Ramadan. In addition to giving to the poor, other possible recipients of zakah are those who fall under the category of serving in the cause of God, or fi sabilillah.

CAIR has in its corner Yusuf Al Qaradawi, an

maximum yield from its donations by holding seminars in May and June instructing Philadelphia Muslims on how to calculate zakah on "retirement accounts, rental property, real estate," and even jewelry.

Azzad is a halal investment firm located in Falls Church, Virginia. Such compliance requires businesses to pursue financial products that are permissible under Islamic principles of social justice and Sharia law, such as refraining from interest lending and products that include gambling, pork and photography.

Azzad was founded by its CEO Bashar Qasem, who perceived a deficiency in Islamic ethical-investment options. Qasem was raised in Jordan, came to the United States in 1987 and became a U.S. citizen in 1996. He was the only Muslim financier in the United States who protested U.S. President Donald Trump's executive order restricting travel from select high-risk countries.

Azzad is one of the few Islamic financial firms engaging in "shareholder advocacy," a program that combines investment with Islamic ethical

values. This includes, under the guise of transparency, trying to dismantle right-of-center free market organizations such as the American Legislative Exchange Council that sought a legislative alternative to New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Green New Deal.

Other Azzad shareholder advocacy causes pertain to admonishing corporations that contribute to global warming and support for resolutions against companies that "set up operations in Jewish settlements in the occupied territories. "One such resolution was against the American tech giant Alphabet Google's Israeli branch, pressuring it to adopt the Holy Land Principles. These "principles" are geared towards increasing Palestinian Arab hiring and includes a so-called code of conduct for 545 American companies in "Palestine-Israel."

The resolution omits any discussion about Israel's legitimate border security concerns, and American shareholders have complained that it proposes expensive and burdensome regulations on companies doing business in Israel. Other critics have called it a "gateway drug to full BDS," the radical BDS campaign aimed at isolating Israel through economic warfare.

But if Qasem was truly concerned about Palestinian employment, he would not be partnering with CAIR, which also supports the BDS enterprise. It was pressure from BDS proponents that forced the Israeli company SodaStream to remove its factory from Ma'ale Adumim, just outside of Jerusalem, resulting in the unemployment of hundreds of Palestinian Arabs.

To ensure that its investments comply with halal Islamic principles, Azzad maintains a Shariah Council of three experts—the most prominent being Dr. Mohamed Adam El-Sheikh, a Sudanese activist from the Muslim Brotherhood, a transnational Sunni Islamist movement with ties to violent jihadist groups. El-Sheikh is one of the founders of the movement's American branch, the

Muslim American Society, which was responsible for a recent video of Muslim schoolchildren at a North Philadelphia mosque singing about beheading Jews.

El-Sheikh was the imam and director of the Islamic Society of Baltimore, whose guest speakers have been known supporters of terrorist organizations. As imam, he was also a regional representative of the Islamic Africa Relief Agency, an organization which the U.S. Treasury Department accused in 2004 of financing Hamas terrorist activities. El-Sheikh also encouraged members of ISB to financially support Chechen jihadists and other Al-Qaeda-linked groups through IARA. In 2004, the Sudanese cleric justified Palestinian suicide bombings in cases "where they cannot defend themselves, and their local religious leaders issued fatwas [Islamic legal rulings] to permit that."

El-Sheikh also founded Dar Al-Hijrah, a Northern Virginia mosque formerly led by the late Al-Qaeda affiliate Anwar al-Awlaki, who was killed in 2011 in a U.S. drone strike in Yemen. Several other extremists have also attended this controversial mosque, including Fort Hood mass shooter Nidal Hassan, and Mohammed Al-Hanooti, an unindicted co-conspirator in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing.

Neither CAIR nor Azzad represent mainstream Muslim values. Yet these two Islamist institutions are influencing many Muslims to finance Islamist special interests, while demonizing the State of Israel. They make a mockery of what is otherwise the noble cause of zakah.

Leonard Getz, CPA, is the Pennsylvania Associate with the Counter-Islamist Grid, a project of the Middle East Forum. He is also a freelance writer and the author of the book *From Broadway to the Bowery*.

<https://www.meforum.org/islamist-watch/61154/sharia-finance-are-being-used-to-bolster>



The Legacy of Islamic Science



By Carlos Escapa

The more I read about the scientists of the Islamic Golden Age, the more I feel inspired by their legacy. Their prodigious intellectual output is increasingly relevant in today's world. I want to dedicate a few minutes of our very busy XXI century to acknowledge and pay homage to luminaries at the root of a very long arc of history that started with algebra and algorithms, and has taken us to Machine Learning and Artificial Intelligence.

Firstly, let me set the space-time context. The Islamic Golden Age refers to the time between the VIII and the XIII centuries when Islamic caliphates reigned from Cordoba in Spain to Samarkand in Uzbekistan. It was a time of prosperity where scientists were rock stars, headhunted throughout the empire, revered by

their fellow citizens and paid handsomely for their knowledge and their research.

The respect that Islam's political and religious rulers had for scientists was rooted on practical requirements. The caliphates were wealthy, advanced societies with a complex system of trade, taxes and public sector spending; they needed good mathematicians (they didn't call them accountants or data scientists yet).

The political rulers relied on astrological advice for major decisions, which astronomers were happy to provide. Calendars, also produced by astronomers, were essential to plan religious practices, particularly determining the start of Ramadan. And as the empire grew in size, geographers were needed to determine how to accurately face Mecca during prayers.

Forward-thinking caliphs built think tanks in major cities across their empire. The most famous of them was al-Mahmun's House of Wisdom in Baghdad, which concentrated the best minds of West and Central Asia speaking all languages and practicing all religions. At the House of Wisdom, scientific documents were brought from all corners of the caliphate, translated to Arabic, and disseminated throughout the empire. These centres of scholarship had very large libraries, often numbering tens of thousands of documents.

There are many Islamic scientists that we should recognise, and who deserve to be better known in the world today.

Three of them are Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi, Abu ibn Ahmad al-Kindi, and Hassan ibn al-Haytham. They were an elite within an elite of intellectual titans, each of whom contributed to science at least as much as European scientists like Galileo, Newton or Einstein.



Al-Khwarizmi was the father of algebra. Born in Persia, in present-day Uzbekistan, he moved to Baghdad and became the librarian of the House of Wisdom. Multilingual and extremely gifted, Al-Khwarizmi had the incredible ability to synthesise mathematical knowledge from Greek, Babylonian and Hindu texts into a single treatise. Today, it is taught to children all over the world, and is known as Arithmetic and Algebra. So powerful was his influence felt in Europe that the latinised version of his name, algorithm, became known as a method or process to obtain a result with mathematical operations. Today algorithms are used to train Machine Learning models.

Al-Kindi was a contemporary of al-Khwarizmi and a colleague at the House of Wisdom. In addition to being one of the best known philosophers in Islam, his gargantuan output of hundreds of papers and treatises range across all fields of science, including geometry, meteorology, zoology, pharmacology and even cryptology and music. He is credited with introducing Indian numerals to the Islamic world and thereafter to Europe. Al-Kindi made the first known use of statistical inference, which is used today to obtain predictions from Machine Learning models.

Al-Haytham, also known as Alhazen, was born and raised in Basra, and later lived in Cairo. His output is thought to have exceeded 200 papers, some of them hugely influential bodies of work that were used in European universities until the XIX century. He created the field of optics, was a renowned mathematician, and an amazing geometer.

A true revolutionary, al-Haytham had the intellectual audacity to challenge hundreds of years of tradition and change the way that knowledge is acquired. What we know today as the scientific method is al-Haytham's method: observation of phenomena, collection of data, formulation of hypotheses with mathematical models, experimentation and reproducibility, and relentless review. For scientists, al-Haytham is a

role model not only for his inquisitiveness and precision, but also for having the self-awareness and humility to accept that the pursuit of scientific knowledge requires both iron discipline and healthy scepticism, and is often hampered by human frailty and bias.

Many works of these Islamic scientists were available in al-Andalus. The translation from Arabic to Latin was started after Toledo was reconquered in 1085. Arabic-speaking Christians in Spain known as Mozarabs played a major role, and welcomed scholars from all over Europe like Gerard of Cremona (Italy) and Robert of Ketton (England). The translations eventually found their way to Roger Bacon, Descartes, Kepler, Copernicus and countless other scientists of the Renaissance, fuelling the rise of modern science across Europe in all fields of knowledge. In mathematics, Islamic scholars inspired hundreds of Europeans to pursue the development of linear algebra, differential calculus and statistics. These are the fundamental mathematics of Machine Learning.

There were many other giants of Islamic Science, such as ibn Sina, al-Biruni, al-Tusi, ibn Hayyan and al-Razi. There are too many to mention. I will close this essay by letting al-Haytham speak to us directly from 1000 years ago, his thoughts more relevant than ever to data scientists in the age of Artificial Intelligence:

"The truthseeker submits to argument and demonstration, and not to the sayings of human beings whose nature is fraught with imperfection and deficiency. The duty of the truthseeker is to make himself an enemy of all that he reads, and, applying his mind to the core, attack it from every side. He should also suspect himself as he performs his critical examination, so that he may avoid falling into either prejudice or bias."

Ibn Al-Haytham, Doubts about Ptolemy, ca 1025

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/legacy-islamic-science-carlos-escapa/>



Turkey's Hagia Sophia and the battle to reconvert it to a mosque

Aljazeera.com



From a symbol of Christendom after its establishment by Byzantine emperor Justinian I in the sixth century, to an emblem of the Muslim Ottoman Empire's sprawling influence, the Hagia Sophia has been at the heart of a centuries-old ideological and political battle.

became known as Istanbul - into the fold of Islam, he converted the Hagia Sophia from a cathedral to a mosque. For hundreds of years, Muslim worshippers from around the world flocked to the city's red-coloured architectural jewel to perform their daily prayers as it stood high with its imposing grey dome and towering minarets.

But in the early 1930s, Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, the founder of the modern Turkish republic, closed the mosque and turned the building into a museum as part of his drive to secularise and modernise the country. Calls to reconvert the Hagia Sophia, also known as the Ayasofya, back into a mosque have since been on the rise.

Growing sharper in recent years, the demand came mostly from Turkey's religious-leaning and nationalist constituencies, many of whom regularly demonstrated at the gates of the Hagia Sophia every May 29, the anniversary of the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople.

But such calls have been vehemently opposed by Greece and the United States, which argue that the heritage site - recognised by the United Nations

Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) since 1985 - should remain a museum out of respect for the country's Christian minority and world history.

'Aura of legitimacy'

On Thursday, Turkey's highest court convened to decide the status of the Hagia Sophia following a petition by a private association to examine the validity of Ataturk's 1934 decree that converted it into a museum. The Council of State evaluated the case and is expected to announce its decision within 15 days. Although previous lawsuits to change the status of the museum have failed, lawmakers say a court decision is only symbolic.

"The court's favourable decision could provide an aura of legitimacy to the museum's conversion into a mosque, but it is not a prerequisite," said Aykan Erdemir, senior director of the Turkey Program at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies and a former parliamentarian.

The former Turkish lawmaker added that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's opinion on the matter was, on the other hand, key to the final status of the building.

<https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/turkey-hagia-sophia-battle-reconvert-mosque-200701162019199.html>



Kishwar Naheed's undying poetry

By I. A. Rahman, Lahore

Kishwar Naheed dates the start of her life as a poet from the age of 20 although she had started writing poems and attending mushairas in her school days. And she began by writing a large number of ghazals. As I do not consider myself a good judge of ghazals, I have to rely on the opinion of experts. In his foreword to the second edition of Kishwar's first collection, *Lab-i-Goya*, Mukhtar Siddiqui noted that the poems added to the new edition were of a higher standard than the earlier poems. The search for finer expression has marked her entire poetic journey. Dr Asif Farrukhi, who translated a large number of Kishwar's poems into English, observed that "Naheed achieved her first measure of success in the traditional genre of the ghazal with its strictly defined conventions. She established herself as an accomplished practitioner but generated much debate when the personal, feminist touch could be discerned in lines like 'kuchh orhni ka rung bhi khilta hua na tha'". Which is a way of saying that while using the traditional form of the ghazal Kishwar was not afraid of extending its scope to include new thoughts? Although she received considerable credit as a ghazal poet, including an Adamjee Award, it was as a writer of nazm in blank verse and prose-nazm that Kishwar became famous. The first permanent theme in her poetry was exploration of man-woman relations and the wounds caused by unrequited love. During this phase, she derived strength from her mother's concern for her and from her own motherhood. Between the lines one can feel a woman's pride as the agent for guaranteeing the continuity of life.

In between publishing collections of her poems, Kishwar Naheed translated more than 100 poems by outstanding poets from four continents, which identified the themes that were close to her heart and also widened her poetic vision. She returned to translating poems from a foreign language, but this time mostly by Arab poets. Such activities also confirmed Kishwar's extraordinarily large reserves



of energy that she used to produce besides collection after collection of poetry, works in prose, including a translation in Urdu of Simone de Beauvoir's seminal study, *The Second Sex*. In her very first collection of poems in blank verse and prose-poems, several poems, such as *Agahi* and *Pehla Safaid Baal* won critics' acclaim. Over the years her perspective kept evolving from personal to general, from poems reflecting her experiences to the trials and tribulations of all women and finally of all people suffering under bondage, exploitation and denial of opportunities for self-realisation. In the poems included in her latter day collections, *Sokhta Samani Dil* and *Shireen Sukhan se Parey*, she speaks for victims of aggression in Afghanistan, Palestine and Pakistan and pays tribute to human rights activists, especially Asma Jahangir. The thread running through all poems is defiance of curbs on freedom. Between 1992 and 2016, in a kind of second coming, Kishwar had a burst of creativity that resulted in some of her most distinctive poems: "Yeh hum gunahgar aurtein/ Jo ahle jubba ki tamkanat se na roab khaen/ Na jaan beychen/ Na sar jhukaen na haath joren." (It is we sinful women/ Who are not awed by the grandeur of those who wear gowns/ Who don't sell their bodies/ Who don't bow their heads, who don't fold their hands.)

"Ke jo bachhiyon se bhi dar gae/ Woh hain kitney chhotay wajood mein/ Karo shehr manadian/ Rakho hosla rakho yeh yaqin/ Ke jo bacchiyon se bhi dar gae/ Woh hi kitney chhotay wajood mein." (That they who become scared of little girls/ Are

very small in stature/ Make proclamations in every city/ Keep your faith and uphold your belief/ That those who become scared of little girls/ Are very small in stature.)

In her poem Pakistan ke Sattar Baras Sawal Kurtay Hain, Kishwar becomes the voice of the desperate people of the country. "Sari dunya dekhne ke baad/ Yehi nazar aarahaa hai ya wahima hai!/ Darwazon se bahar qadam rakhne wale/ Sab pathar ho gaey hain/ Woh tum ho ya mera humzaad/ Yeh tau batao tumhein jaana kahan hai"! (Having seen the world for long/ What I see now is real or feigned I don't know/ Whoever stepped out of the door turned into stone/ You, me or my alter ego/ At least tell us where you want to go!)

Kishwar is blunt and outspoken to a fault while expressing her opinion about men and matters. She has no respect for all those who seek exemption from being sized up on the strength of their office or wealth. She does not believe in reserving her

judgement. What she thinks of humbugs and hypocrites she declares without any delay. Yet she is one of the most popular persons in Pakistan and abroad because she does not discriminate between those who fall in the line of her fire. Even the victims of her harsh words do not take them to heart. Besides she gets marks for her humility in giving credit where it is due. For instance, she says about Parveen Shakir; "Younger to me in age but greater than me as a poet." Kishwar Naheed is still described as a woman poet, the implication being her categorisation with poets less exalted than male versifiers. She is surely proud of her womanhood but she has made her place amidst the entire body of Pakistani poets. Even on the strength of her work so far it will be difficult to exclude her from any critic's anthology of all-time outstanding Urdu poetry.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1567889/kishwars-undying-poetry>

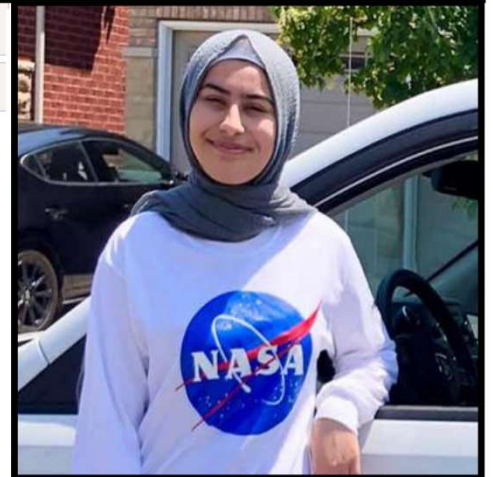


Pakistani student wins NASA – STEM internship

Milton – Ontario -- Pakistani Canadian Schanze Sial has been making headlines with news of her acceptance into the STEM Enhancement in Earth Science internship program, run jointly by NASA and the University of Texas' Center for Space Research. Here is her story

I was born in New Haven, Connecticut. I currently live in Milton, Canada, after moving from the United States at the age of eight. I have studied in Canada since grade 2. My family consists of five people. My father, mother, older brother, my younger sister, and myself. I am a rising senior at Bishop Reding Catholic Secondary school where I am enrolled in the Specialist High Skills Major (SHSM) program in computer engineering. SHSM allows students to experience engineering career-focused opportunities towards their high school diploma. SHSM requires students to take specific courses like computer science, computer engineering, and sciences; I took chemistry, physics, and biology, religion as I do attend a

c a t h o l i c school, math, and lastly E n g l i s h . Aside from SHSM, I am a part of school sports teams and clubs. I am on the Basketball team, Softball team, Model UN, Business Club, and one of the leaders of the students of the living life club. I also volunteer and work part-time for the Town of Milton as a sports instructor, monitor, and event planner/organizer. I love teaching kids and helping them develop skills they can use within sports and in the real world. I have been volunteering for a year and a half and working for the town of Milton for 1 year.



Talking in Punjabi does not make you uneducated:

Dr Sugra Sadaf

By Adnan Lodhi

Dr. Sadaf, recently appointed DG at PILAC shares her vision for the language and the institute



LAHORE:

Dr. Sugra Sadaf, a renowned poet and literary writer, has been appointed by the Punjab Government as the new Director General of Punjab Institute of Language Art and Culture (PILAC). Sadaf had already served as DG PILAC for three years before being replaced by Saman Roy last year, who has now been appointed as the Executive Director at the Lahore Arts Council. Since Roy's departure, the DG post at PILAC was vacant and subsequently filled in by Sadaf, who is widely regarded for her various contributions to not just the institute but the Punjabi language itself. Talking to The Express Tribune, Sadaf relayed her vision for the institution at this point in time, citing her past tenure and its successes. "In the past, I worked with a mission and that was the reason that we saw events at PILAC that were never held before," she said.

"The tradition of arranging festivals during the urs of prominent Punjabi saints was started right here at PILAC. We also arranged the first Punjabi Film Maila at PILAC which featured super hit Punjabi films and various Punjabi artists. Not just that, but the biggest dictionary for Punjabi was compiled here at PILAC under my supervision and that is our asset," she shared, stressing that being

appointed at such a high and prestigious post calls for hard work and sincerity.

PILAC is the only such institution of its kind that has been set up solely for the purpose of promoting Punjabi language and culture and to highlight the rich history and traditions of the region. Thus, according to Sadaf, it is imperative that the same is made sure of. Leading literary figures in Punjab also expressed elation at her

reappointment, hoping for a renewed vigour at the institute, including Punjabi poet Baba Najmi.

"Dr Sugra Sadaf has a history of serving the Punjabi language and highlighting it at an international level. There is huge population in the province that speaks Punjabi and this region has a rich history including folk music and wonderful traditions. There was dire need of a person at PILAC who understands this and is aware of our history," said Najmi.

"We will soon see cultural activities at PILAC. The thing worth lauding is that in a minimum budget, Sadaf managed to do an excellent job and will hopefully do so in future. Us Punjabi poets and the literary community at large are happy over her appointment," he added.

"Other than printing a Punjabi dictionary in seven jild which is the biggest Punjabi dictionary in the world, I also worked to establish a folk music promotion studio at PILAC, inviting artists from across Punjab to come and hone their talent," expressed Sadaf, adding that she hopes that PILAC's past glory will be restored soon.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2252664/talking-in-punjabi-does-not-make-you-uneducated-dr-sugra-sadaf>



Pakistan Army gets its first female lieutenant general

Lieutenant General Nigar Johar appointed as first female Surgeon General of Pakistan Army

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Army announced its first female lieutenant general on Tuesday with the promotion of Major General Nigar Johar to the three-star rank. The officer has been appointed as the first female Surgeon General of the Pakistan Army, read the statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations of Pakistan (ISPR) office. Lieutenant General Nigar Johar hails from Panjpit, Swabi district and has been serving as Commandant Military Hospital Rawalpindi, according to the statement. In recent years, Pakistan has also increased its female representation in the United Nations peacekeeping missions. It was the first country to deploy female engagement teams. Currently, there are 30 Pakistani female officers serving in two such teams, and yet another team was to be deployed in Congo by June 20. Over the years, Pakistan has contributed to the UN's peacekeeping operations with over 200,000 troops in 46 missions across 28 countries. At least 157 Pakistani service members have also been killed during these operations but Islamabad remains committed to helping the UN

in building peace and restoring stability in turbulent regions. Globally, at least 3,900 peacekeepers from different UN member nations have lost their lives

while serving in different conflict zones across the world since 1948. While Pakistan's peacekeeping role, particularly in Africa and the Balkans, remains rather well known, the female peacekeepers the country has deployed have received rather less attention. Indeed the role of women is often glossed over even though they are understood to be vital contributors in any peacekeeping activity.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/2252671/pakistan-army-gets-its-first-female-lieutenant-general> ❀❀❀



Major General Nigar Johar

High Speed Train to resume between Mecca and Medina

JEDDAH — The countdown has begun for the resumption of service of Haramain High-Speed Train between Makkah and Madinah via Jeddah and the King Abdullah Economic City of Rabigh. The train service will resume in September, for which the start of reservations will be announced soon. Reservations and tickets will be available online via the Al-Haramain Railway website. The Haramain train service resumed operation last December after a halt of two and a half months following a massive fire that engulfed Sulaymaniyah station in Jeddah. The station was out of operation after the fire. Later, the service had been suspended again following the imposition of travel restrictions due to the coronavirus pandemic in March this year. The suspension period was used to complete all



additional work so as to meet the great demand to transport the largest number of travelers between the two holy cities. The railway stations in Makkah, Jeddah, Jeddah airport, Madinah and Rabigh will be ready to receive passengers in line with the precautionary measures and preventive protocols against the pandemic. ❀❀❀

The British-Pakistani doctors saving lives in two countries

By Secunder Kirmani

From his laptop at his home just outside London, Dr Tahir Akhtar is helping treat a coronavirus patient in Lahore, Pakistan. Via a video link, a doctor there shows Dr Akhtar around the intensive care unit at the city's Jinnah Hospital.



Dr Akhtar is an intensive care unit consultant in Britain's National Health Service, and has helped lead the response to Covid-19 in Essex, where he lives.

Now, in his free time, he is using telemedicine software to share his experiences with counterparts in his country of birth, Pakistan - advising doctors on the best way to treat their patients.

"We are very proud of the NHS service we are giving here," Dr Akhtar said. "And because of our relationships both in medicine and otherwise, it was very important for us to help our colleagues and to help the people of Pakistan."

38 Dr Akhtar told the BBC the huge number of coronavirus cases meant that even in the UK it was not possible for intensive care doctors alone to treat seriously ill patients - doctors from different specialties also had to be drafted in. In Pakistan,

the difficulties would be amplified, he said, making it useful for those doctors to have "someone they can talk to, someone they can take advice from".

Dr Muhammad Ashraf Zia, who heads the Covid-19 ICU in Jinnah Hospital, told the BBC it was "very useful" to exchange ideas with Dr Akhtar - even though he is a senior doctor himself, as coronavirus is such a new disease. He said his team had begun using certain medicines to treat patients that they previously had not, and they were now producing "very good results".

There have been about 250,000 coronavirus cases and 5,000 deaths recorded in Pakistan. That's substantially lower than in Britain, where more than 44,000 people have died, even though it is likely fatalities in Pakistan have been undercounted.

However, Pakistan has far fewer doctors per capita than the UK, and at times hospitals there have been stretched. According to the World Health Organization, there are under 10 medical doctors per 10,000 of the population in Pakistan, about three times fewer than in the UK.

Dr Suhail Chughtai, another UK-based doctor of Pakistani origin, built the telemedicine software used to connect to the intensive care unit in Lahore. The software allows doctors to talk via video link and exchange copies of case notes as they speak. His aim was "to plug the gap" in Pakistan caused by a relative lack of intensive care specialists, by "importing" those doctors from the UK via telemedicine, he said.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-53282823>



Salma Lakhani First Muslim appointed Lt. Governor of Alberta



Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said that Salma Lakjani was devoted to supporting people in her community, from new immigrants and young people, to women and families.

A community advocate and businessperson Salma Lakhani made history on Wednesday upon her appointment as the Lieutenant Governor of the province of Alberta, the first-ever Muslim with roots in the Indian subcontinent to occupy the post in Canada.

Her appointment was announced by Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. "Ms. Lakhani is devoted to supporting people in her community, from new immigrants and young people, to women and families. As Lieutenant Governor of Alberta, I know she will serve the people of her province and our country well, and continue to be a source of inspiration for all Canadians," the Prime Minister said in a statement.

Lakhani, a follower of the Ismaili sect, was born in Uganda but her family was forced to leave after the Indian-origin community in the African country was expelled by dictator Idi Amin.

She has a degree in Clinical Biochemistry from the University of Manchester. She later moved to Edmonton in 1977, along with her husband. They have two daughters.

A Lt Governor in Canada is the equivalent of a

Governor in India and is nominated by the federal government. While the role is largely ceremonial, the appointment is symbolic of diversity in how leadership in the country looks.

Among those who welcomed her appointment was the Premier of Alberta Jason Kenney, who tweeted, "Ms. Lakhani has a remarkable background in business and volunteerism, reflecting the Alberta culture of enterprise and community."

The PMO noted she was a "long-time community advocate and successful business owner" who has dedicated herself to "helping people in need and those who face obstacles to success in our society. Through her work to advance education, health care, women's empowerment, human rights, and support for new immigrants, she continues to be a champion of diversity, pluralism, and inclusion."

She was a founding member of 'NorQuest College's 1000 Women: A Million Possibilities' movement and has been on its advisory committee and board for the past decade. Lakhani is also associated with the Aga Khan Foundation.

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/salma-lakhani-appointed-lieutenant-governor-of-alberta-first-muslim-in-canada-to-hold-post>





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