



SCRAPPED

Government scraps 'secret inquests' plan



Moves to allow some courts to sit behind closed doors to hear evidence from spies will "throw a cloak of secrecy" over the country's judicial system, human-rights campaigners warned.

The Government's original plans for a major extension of "secret courts" in civil proceedings have been substantially scaled back in the face of protests from

lawyers and MPs of all parties.

But the Justice and Security Bill, which was finally published after wrangling within the Coalition, still faces widespread criticism for undermining fundamental British principles of open justice.

Critics also warned that the revised proposals could still prevent the public from learning about allegations of

complicity in rendition by the intelligence services.

Courts will still be able to hear evidence in secret, known as closed material proceedings, but only when national security was the justification. Inquests have been removed from the plans and judges, not ministers, will have the power to order the secret sessions



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the Passion

By **Shakir Ahmed**
source Press TV

BP to exploit Libya's oil



So everyone were wondering how long would it take oil giant British Petroleum (BP) to return to Libya to resume oil and gas exploration work, well not long it seems.

Following a meeting between Nuri Berruien, the head of Libya's National Oil Corporation (NOC), and Michael Daly, BP's executive president for exploration, in Tripoli

on May 29, 2012, BP announced plans to resume pursuing Libya oil interests, halted when the North African country witnessed pro-democracy protests last year.

"During the meeting, BP announced the lifting of the state of force majeure starting on May 15, 2012, and return to carry out exploratory activity at onshore and

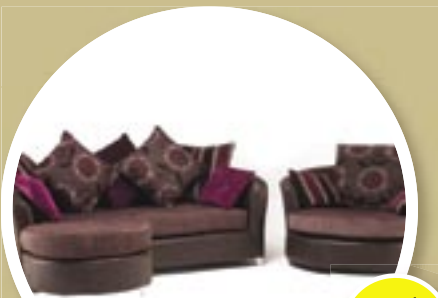
offshore areas belonging to it in Libya," NOC said in a statement on its website.

Earlier this month, British companies gathered in London for a one-day conference sponsored by finance firm PwC, to compete for billions of pounds worth of contracts in oil-rich Libya as it is pressing ahead with plans to restore its infrastructure torn apart by the very same government.

Before the beginning of revolution in Libya in February 2011, the oil-rich country produced around 1.6million barrels per day. Libya was the seventeenth-largest oil producer in the world and the third largest in Africa.

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UK boycott movement worries Israelis

In Case You Missed It



A Knesset committee discussed the “anti-Israel climate in the UK” last month, as moves to tighten a boycott grip on the Israeli regime gain momentum.

Einat Wilf, member of the Knesset for the Independence faction, said the meeting aimed to “address the challenges faced by the Jewish and pro-Israel community in Great Britain

and the range of possible responses to these challenges,” insisting Britain is becoming the European centre for anti-Israel demonstration.

Earlier in April, Britain’s fifth-largest food retailer and the country’s largest mutual business, the Co-operative Group, extended a boycott of goods from illegal settlements that have been produced on occupied

Palestinian territories in the West Bank.

After that, Unison, Britain’s largest trade union, representing 1.3 million public service workers, blocked the participation of an Israeli expert at an NHS-sponsored workshop on negotiation and conflict management in Manchester on May 8.

The meeting is expected to include representatives from the Jewish Agency for Israel, the Jewish National Fund, World Jewish Congress and the Zionist Council in Israel.

Jon Benjamin, the chief executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, described Britain’s fifth-largest food retailers’ ban on products from Israeli settlements as “naive and a retrograde step.”

The ban will leave a £350,000 black hole in the sales of the suppliers Agrexco, Arava Export Growers and Adafresh as well as the Israeli regime’s largest agricultural export company, Mehadrin.

UK to keep military presence in Afghanistan beyond 2014

British Prime Minister David Cameron has reversed an election time slogan by which he promised to withdraw all UK troops from Afghanistan by 2014, it has been revealed.

A senior government official said on condition of anonymity that the UK may keep a number of troops in Afghanistan to fight what he called ‘terrorism’ after 2014.

“As we’ve said previously, British forces will not remain in a combat role in Afghanistan beyond 2014,” the official said.

“The majority of forces that

remain in Afghanistan will be in a training and mentoring role,” he said.

“But I wouldn’t rule out a small number of forces playing a counterterrorism role if needed. This would be in keeping with how we are working to protect ourselves from the terrorism threat emanating from other parts of the world, such as the Arabian Peninsula,” the official said.

It is the first time Britain has given any indication it may keep troops in Afghanistan after 2014 apart from a small training contingent.

Britain plans to withdraw 500 troopers from its 9,500-strong force

in Afghanistan this year before ending combat operations in 2014 when Afghan security forces are due to have taken over responsibility for security.

Meanwhile, it was claimed in another report that Britain has paved the way for a deal to reopen NATO supply lines through Pakistan.

A top British lawmaker said on the condition of anonymity that during his recent visit to London Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani gave positive signal to the British prime minister for the resumption of NATO supply routes.

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Surveillance programme could expose private lives



British officials have given their word: "We won't read your emails."

But experts say the government's proposed new surveillance programme will gather so much data that spooks won't have to read your messages to guess what you're up to.

The Home Office stresses it won't be reading the content of every Britons' communications, saying the data it seeks "is not the content of any communication." It is, however, looking for information about who's sending the message and to whom, where it's sent from and other details, including a message's length and its format.

The proposal, unveiled as part of the government's annual legislative programme, is just a draft bill, so it could be modified or scrapped. But if passed in its current form, it would put a huge amount of personal data at the government's disposal, which it could use to deduce a startling amount about Britons' private lives — from sleep patterns to driving habits or even infidelity.

"We're really entering a whole new phase of analysis based on the data that we can collect," said Gerald Kane, an information systems expert at Boston College. "There is quite a lot you can learn."

The ocean of information is hard to fathom. Britons generate 4 billion hours of voice calls and 130 billion text messages annually, according to industry figures. In 2008, the BBC put the annual number of UK-linked emails at around 1 trillion.

Then there are instant messaging services run by companies such as BlackBerry, Internet telephone services such as Skype, chat rooms, and in-game services like those used by World of Warcraft.

Communications service providers, who would log all that back-and-forth, believe the government's program would force them to process petabytes (1 quadrillion bytes) of information every day. It's a mind-boggling amount of data, on the scale of every book, movie and piece of music ever released.

'Call to arms, Blair back to politics'

Former Labour Chancellor Alistair Darling has said former Prime Minister Tony Blair may return to UK domestic policies as part of a "call to arms."

Darling said Blair has "a lot to contribute and I hope he'll contribute more in the future," hoping that Blair's return to domestic policies would help Britain find a way out of its economic woes.

Furthermore, Darling expressed hopes that Blair could help prevent Scotland from becoming independent as former Prime Minister had said that he would work with political opponents in the No to Independence campaign, reported the Huffington Post UK.

"So I welcome, you know, this is a call to arms, if you like, whether it's the constitution in Scotland or whether it's the economy in whole United Kingdom, this is the time for people to stand up and be counted," said Darling.

Reports about Blair's return to UK politics come as a tribunal in Malaysia has found Blair and former US President George Bush guilty of war crimes and "crimes against peace."

Students at Stanford University protested at Blair's visit to their university. "Tony Blair has been found guilty of war crimes under international law by more than one tribunal," said Zoe Lidstrom, one of the students.

Activists protest over Olympic missiles

A British campaign group against placing of surface-to-air missiles in East London over Olympic security pretexts held a protest rally in London.

Stop the Olympic Missiles campaign said angry residents of the missile-sites across London as well as spokespersons from Stop the War Coalition, the Ministry of Defense, East London Teachers Association

and South London Against Missiles campaign group attended the event.

The "Do We Want Missiles in Our Communities" gathering is a reaction to the Ministry of Defense's deployment of high-velocity surface-to-air missiles across London including in Bow Quarter, Oxleas Woods and Blackheath.

Stop the Olympic Missiles also said they will hold a protest walk on

Saturday June 9.

Protestors say deployment of the missiles will do nothing to increase Olympic security, while endangering residents' lives by turning their vicinity into a "magnet for terrorists."

They also argue that the missiles limited range of 3-4 miles means "anything they hit could fall anywhere" in residential areas in "Greenwich, Lewisham or Bexley."

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MCB launches petition to oppose same sex marriage



The Muslim Council of Britain, the umbrella body representing Britain's Muslims, has launched a petition opposing the government's proposals to change the legal definition of marriage.

Based on the highly successful Coalition for Marriage petition (C4M), which has so far gathered over 500,000 signatures, 'Muslims Defending Marriage' is supported by key voices in the Muslim Community.

The petition reads as follows: 'I disagree with the government's

proposed re-defining of marriage. I fully support the long-standing legal definition of marriage as the voluntary union of a man and a woman to the exclusion of all others.'

The campaign website, which is modelled on that of C4M, calls on Muslims signing to spread the word, respond to the government consultation on same-sex marriage and to contact their MPs.

It carries supporting videos from Farooq Murad, Secretary General of the Muslim Council of Britain,

Maulana Madani, Chairman of Mosques and Imams National and Shaykh Haitham, Chairman Muslim Research and Development.

Farooq Murad, the MCB's Secretary General said last week: 'We have launched Muslims Defending Marriage (MDM) as we felt we had a duty to defend the meaning of marriage, guard its sanctity and protect the welfare of children'.

He added, 'Other faith communities have already taken steps to evidence the strength of feeling in favour of keeping marriage intact. It is imperative that the Muslim community does all it can to contribute to this because we have a sacred duty to stand up for marriage and to support those, of whichever faith, that are doing so. We are aiming at mass participation from the Muslim community on an issue that will have such far reaching consequences for everyone.'

The MCB says that it stands opposed to discrimination in all its forms, including homophobia. The purpose of this campaign is to stand firm for the true definition of marriage, as with other faiths, Islam recognises marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

Leicester's first Muslim mayor sworn in

The city's first Muslim Lord Mayor was sworn in at a ceremony held at the Town Hall.

In a traditional inauguration, Councillor Abdul Osman was officially made Lord Mayor of Leicester at Leicester City Council's annual meeting, held in the Town Hall's chambers.

Coun Osman, who joined the city council in 1996, takes over from Councillor Rob Wann.

Coun Osman said: "It's an

important year, with the Diamond Jubilee and the Olympics, so it's a privilege for me to hold office with everything that's going on.

"I want to focus on visiting the communities and raising the profile of the office of Lord Mayor. I'm proud to be the first Muslim councillor to hold the position – we've had Christian, Hindu, Sikh and now I'm able to bring the Islamic faith to the office which is a great honour."

Each year, the new mayor

nominates a charity which he will raise money for.

Coun Osman has chosen the stroke unit at the Leicester Royal Infirmary and is aiming to raise £60,000 for the cause.

He said: "I feel as if it's quite a symbolic issue because it affects everyone regardless of their age, colour or background – and our city is one of the most diverse communities in the country."

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Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies Granted Royal Charter



The Oxford Center for Islamic Studies (OCIS) has been granted the Royal Charter.

Royal Charters, granted by the sovereign on the advice of the Privy Council, have a history dating back to the 13th century.

They are now normally granted only to institutions that work in the public interest and which can demonstrate pre-eminence, stability

and permanence in their particular field.

The University of Oxford, and many of the Oxford Colleges, as well as a number of other leading British academic institutions, are similarly incorporated by Royal Charter.

“This is a most important and welcome moment and I thank warmly all those who have encouraged and assisted the center’s development

over more than 25 years. As well as contributing strongly to the intellectual and academic life of Oxford, by focusing on the study of Muslim culture and civilization, the center has developed active global links with leading academic institutions internationally, Dr. Farhan Nizami, OCIS Director, said in a statement.

Dr. Nizami expressed confidence that the contribution and importance of the center would grow in the years ahead and that it has the opportunity to make a unique contribution to greater understanding of the Muslim World, and more positive international dialogue, based on strong academic foundations.

The OCIS, founded in 1985, is a recognized independent center at the University of Oxford.

The center promotes multi-disciplinary teaching, research and publication at Oxford related to Muslim culture and civilization. Its fellows teach in a range of faculties across the University of Oxford. Through its international outreach, and links with academic institutions worldwide, the center provides a meeting place for scholars studying all aspects of contemporary Muslim societies.

Police spying on public from the Skies

The London Metropolitan Police have been secretly using super-sensitive cameras and sound recorders on its Air Support Unit helicopters, raising fears that the government is spying on the lives of ordinary British citizens in violation of their civil liberties.

East London residents have recently become used to regular flights by the choppers based at Lippitts Hill out in Epping Forest.

However, the NBC News channel has revealed the aircraft are using cameras that allow their operators to recognize the color of one’s clothes from over one kilometer away, thanks

to their ‘spotter scope’ x1000 zoom capability.

The cameras are reportedly able to see on rooftops and other inaccessible places very clearly with “as much detail as they need to” in a fashion that allows a “good clothing description” of their target.

This is while the choppers are also equipped with “multiple number of recorders” that enable them to gather evidence that is “not just visual, it’s audio as well.”

The police have claimed the capability will be put to use during the Olympics and public order situations to “facilitate crowd

movement and crowds dynamics.”

The Met’s Sergeant Richard Brandon told NBC that the cameras will provide “reassurance for the public” during the Games.

However, in the context of the government’s ongoing efforts to draft a law to increase its surveillance powers on the public’s emails and social media and the revelations back in February that councils have spent half a billion pounds (£515m) on CCTV cameras in four years, a big question remains hanging in the air: whether the government is to breach the public’s civil liberties to ‘reassure’ their security.

Poll reveals Al Qaeda's unpopularity among Muslims



An opinion survey has revealed that an overwhelming majority of Muslims in Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, Egypt, and Pakistan think poorly of al-Qaeda.

The opinion poll, whose results came out, had been conducted by the Washington-based think tank, Pew Research Center through face-to-face interviews with 4,500 adult Muslims in those countries from March 13 to April 19.

The results showed that al-Qaeda is most unpopular in Lebanon where 98 percent of the people questioned had an unfavorable opinion of the group.

In Jordan, Turkey, and Egypt respectively 77, 73, and 71 percent of the respondents expressed negative views of al-Qaeda.

In Pakistan, 55 percent of those polled had negative opinions about the group.

Islam among fastest growing faiths in US



Islam is the fastest-growing religion in the United States in the past decade, a new census has found, The Globe and Mail newspaper reported.

The census, by the Association of Statisticians of American Religious

Bodies in Chicago, found that American Muslims almost doubled in the past decade.

It estimated that Muslims are now numbered at 2.6 million in 2010, from only one million in 2001.

Unofficial estimates put the number of Muslims in the US at between six to seven million.

The census also found that Muslims now outnumber Jews in much of the American Midwest and South.

The report attributes the sharp rise in the number of US Muslims to conversions and immigration.

Iraqi MP urges muslim countries to cut ties with US

Member of Iraq's parliament Maha Ad-Douri has issued a statement condemning desecration of the Holy Quran by a US pastor.

In the statement, that was read out in the parliament, she called on Muslim countries to cut relations with the United States and boycott American goods in protest to the sacrilege, Aswat Al-Iraq news agency reported.

She said the Islamic Ummah should stand up against this offensive act by severing economic and political relations with the US.

Ad-Douri said Terry Jones should be put on trial and the church in which the desecration took place should be closed.

The Iraqi lawmaker also slammed US president Barack Obama for failing to act against Terry Jones.

She further said Terry Jones is not a true Christian because otherwise he would not have defiled the Quran, the Holy Book in which there is a Surah named after Hazrat Maryam (Mary).

The survey also estimates that there are more than 2,000 mosques across the United States, of which 166 are located in Texas.

An earlier Muslim study found that the number of mosques in the US jumped in the past decade to reach more than 2,000 mosques.

The study, released also found that US Muslims are estimated at seven million.

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Swissôtel Hotels and Resorts to open new property in Makkah



Switzerland-based hospitality group Swissôtel Hotels and Resorts is to open a new 1,487-bedroom property in the Islamic holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia, this summer.

It is the operator's first property in the Middle East and will welcome guests from the first day of the month-long religious festival of Ramadan, which this year starts on 20 July.

One of the largest hotels in Saudi Arabia, Swissôtel Makkah will offer bedrooms that either overlook the holy city or the Kaaba, the Islamic faith's most sacred site.

A signature restaurant and the

Café Swiss casual dining eatery will also be on offer as part of the property. Non-Muslims are not permitted to enter the city of Makkah.

Swissôtel president Meinhard Huck said: "We anticipate Swissôtel Makkah to be the preferred destination not only for pilgrims and Umra performers but also for business travellers, who will be visiting the holy city of Makkah."

Makkah is the Islamic faith's holiest city and welcomes millions of Muslim people each year for the Hajj, a pilgrimage that all able believers must make at least once during their life.

American preacher chooses to teaches Quran in a church

American preacher, Scott Morgan, embarked, by a personal initiative, on teaching the Quranic verses in a church in Virginia State, and he chose the verses that handle the issues of women, peaceful coexistence and citizenship.

He also interpreted its meaning to the church attendants. Moreover, an American TV channel broadcasted Morgan's interpretation of the verses, and pointed that at a time the United States of America is the homeland of Pastor Terry Jones who burned a copy of the Holy Quran in Florida State recently, it is the homeland of

a number of preachers who teach Quran within its churches.

Pastor Morgan said: I chose two subjects that the Americans rank as highly important: violence and the woman.

He demonstrated through the Ayahs that Islam forbids violence against non-Muslims, citing certain incidents that corroborate his findings from the biography and stands of the Prophet (PBUH).

As for the issue of women, Morgan cited certain verses that elevate the woman's status and assert her role in building the society.

News Corp ups stake in Alwaleed's Rotana

Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation has increased its stake in Saudi Arabia-based media firm Rotana Group by acquiring newly-issued shares in the company.

News Corp will pay \$35m for the shares, which will take its stake in Rotana to 18.97 percent. Last year, News Corp upped its stake to 14.53 percent.

The acquisition was announced after a meeting of the Rotana board chaired by Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal, chairman of Rotana Holding, Saudi Gazette reported.

Prince Alwaleed holds a stake of about seven percent in News Corp through his investment vehicle Kingdom Holding Co.

News Corp acquired an initial stake in Rotana in May 2010, in an investment worth around \$70m.

The media giant had another 18 months after the completion of the deal to double its stake for another \$70m.

In January, US media giant News Corp secured a deal to take a minority stake in Dubai media company the Moby Group, in a bid to aid the group's expansion around the Middle East.

The American preacher continued to say: If the distorted image of Islam and Muslims that the media outlets depicted changed even at the level of one individual, then this constitutes a great gain to America.

The mentioned TV channel pointed that this is not the first time the Quran is taught in American churches, for Chicago was home to several similar experiences that resulted in several positive outcomes as the lesson attendants explained.

An American lady once pointed that she had a wonderful time and that they discussed taboos.

US military taught Islam is enemy, Muslims to be nuked



The US military has been offering a course which teaches that its enemy is Islam in general and suggesting a Hiroshima-type massacre to obliterate the Islamic holy cities of Makkah and Medina in what can be seen as another instance of promoting Islamophobia in the United States.

The course, titled "Perspectives on Islam and Islamic Radicalism," was offered five times a year since 2004, with about 20 students each time, meaning roughly 800 students have taken the course over the years before it was removed in late April after protests.

"They hate everything you stand for and will never coexist with you, unless you submit," the instructor, Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Dooley, said in a presentation last July for the course at Joint Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia, the Associated Press reported.

The college, for professional military members, teaches mid-level officers and government civilians on subjects related to planning and executing war.

Dooley, who still works for the college, also presumed, for the purposes of his theoretical war plan, that the Geneva Conventions that set standards of armed conflict are "no longer relevant."

"This would leave open the option once again of taking war to a civilian population wherever necessary (the historical precedents of Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Nagasaki being applicable...)," Dooley said.

His war plan suggests possible outcomes such as "Saudi Arabia threatened with starvation...Islam reduced to cult status," and the Muslim holy cities of Makkah and Madina in Saudi Arabia "destroyed."

In his July 2011 presentation on a "counter-jihad," Dooley asserted that the rise of what he called a "military Islam/Islamist resurgence" compels the United States to consider extreme measures, "unconstrained by fears of political incorrectness."

A copy of the presentation was obtained and posted online by Wired.com's Danger Room blog. The college didn't respond to requests by the Associated Press for copies of the documents, but a Pentagon spokesman authenticated the documents.

Dooley also refused to comment to the AP, saying "Can't talk to you, sir," and hanging up when reached by telephone at his office.

Islamic economy council launched in Tunisia

A national council of Islamic economy has been founded in Tunisia with the aim of facilitating the development of the country's Islamic financial system.

The council, whose board has 28 members, was officially launched last month.

The council has invited Tunisian economic experts and bank managers to join it.

Issuing Islamic bonds, establishing Takaful Islamic insurance, developing Islamic financial sector and launching Islamic banks are on the council's agenda.

During the former Tunisian dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali's era, there were restrictions for Islamic activities in the North African country. With the ouster of the dictator, investors and economic experts have started efforts for developing Islamic economy in the country.

Opening an Islamic centre in the Serbian capital

By the contributions of donors, especially from the Azerbaijani government, an Islamic center was opened in the Serbian capital, Belgrade, near the only mosque in the area that would serve as headquarters for the Islamic educational institutions in Serbia.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Serbian President, Boris Tadić, some officials from Azerbaijan, and a number of heads of religious communities in Serbia.

They all called for brotherly harmony between religions and expressed hopes that the time of conflicts in which the Mosque was damaged would never come again.

In his speech, the Mufti of the capital, Sheikh Muhamed Jusufspahić, welcomed the guests, noting that Muslims born in Serbia's capital deserve the chance to education in their own city.

A number of Islamic figures, including the Head of Administration of Muslims of the Caucasus, and the Head of the Russian Orthodox church in Azerbaijan, delivered speeches in which they emphasized the importance of peaceful coexistence between religions in their country, noting that Serbia ought to follow their example and go on with its policy that promotes peaceful coexistence.

Survey shows discrimination against Muslims in Netherlands



A recent opinion poll indicates the widespread religious intolerance against the Muslim community in the Netherlands as Islamophobia intensified across Europe.

The survey conducted by Maurice De Hond pollster found more than half of the Muslim immigrants in the country complaining about religious discrimination.

Fifty-eight percent of the respondents believed that the behavior of the Dutch government and people to Muslims is discriminatory in comparison with immigrants of other religions.

Two percent of the participants said they did not know whether such discrimination exists while 40 percent said of fair behavior to the Muslim

immigrants.

The poll questioned 700 Muslim adults face-to-face and by the telephone on 22-25 April 2012 and was published on May 4.

The Muslims community in the Netherlands comprises mostly of workers from Morocco and Turkey who have moved to the European nation through legal channels.

The foreigners are normally granted Dutch citizenship after a five-year-long stay in the country, and enjoy the right to take part in local elections.

Muslim immigrants, however, seldom take an active role in the votes due to the discriminatory behavior from the Dutch public and government.

Palestinians of Gaza Unveil Largest Map of Historical Palestine

People of Gaza have unveiled the largest map of historical Palestine during a ceremony attended by observers of the Guinness World Records.

The map is 9.3 meters wide and 21.5 meters long which make it the largest of its kind in the world.

Sponsored by the Hamas Refugees' Affairs Bureau, the project was part of the programs to draw attention to the plight of Palestinian refugees.

High ranking officials who attended the unveiling ceremony said the map could symbolically represent the Palestinian people's right to their homeland.

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Saudi builds world's first underwater mosque

A group of divers have built the world's first underwater mosque off the coast of Saudi.

Saudi Arabia has built the world's first underwater mosque, according to reports in an Arabic newspaper.

A group of divers from the kingdom built the mosque using plastic pipes filled with sand under the sea off the northwestern coast of the town of Tabuk, close to the border with Jordan, Almadina Arabic

language daily reported.

"One of our colleagues came up with this idea last summer and we decided to carry it out," diver Hamadan bin Salim Al Masoudi was reported as saying.

"We have just completed the construction of the mosque... when we put the final touches on it, it was time for afternoon prayers, so we performed group prayers in the first underwater mosque in history."

The trend for underwater structures comes days after the shipbuilding arm of Dubai World announced plans to build a series of underwater hotels in the emirate.

In a statement Drydocks World said it has signed an agreement with a Swiss contractor to develop the World Discus Hotel, which is partly submerged under the sea.

93% Muslims Overwhelmingly Voted for Hollande in French Elections



The Le Figaro survey showed that 93 percent of Muslims voted for Hollande in the runoff.

A sweeping majority of Muslim voters in France cast ballot for Socialist candidate Francois Hollande in the run-off election, a new survey has found, the Business Insider reported.

"It is the mark of a true rejection of Nicolas Sarkozy" said Julien Goarant, research director at Opinionway.

Hollande defeated his right-wing incumbent Sarkozy with 52 percent in runoff vote.

A survey of 10,000 voters conducted by Opinionway for Le Figaro showed that 93 percent of Muslims voted for Hollande in the runoff.

Another poll put the Muslim support for the Socialist candidate at 85 percent.

The percentage is much higher than the first round when 59 percent of Muslim voters cast ballot for Hollande.

Sarkozy only got 4 percent of Muslim votes in that round.

Another survey for La Vie found

that 79 percent of Catholics voted for Sarkozy in the runoff.

Hollande got only 21 percent of the Catholic votes.

However, the Socialist candidate won wide support among those describing themselves as "without religion" as 70 percent of them voted for him, according to Le Figaro.

Sarkozy has drawn the ire from French Muslims, estimated at six million, over a series of measures targeting their community.

He has toned up his rhetoric against Muslim immigration, an effort to win far-right votes.

Sarkozy has also expelled a number of imams following a spate of killing in Toulouse on claims of inciting hatred.

Muslim leaders have distanced themselves from the killing, saying such atrocities run counter to the Islamic teachings.

In 2010, Sarkozy's Union for a Popular Movement (UMP) party launched a debate on the role of Islam in secular France.

He has also banned the Muslim hijab in schools and face-veil in public.

New French Cabinet Includes Three Muslims

France's first left-wing President in nearly 20 years, Francois Hollande has unveiled a government that includes three Muslim ministers.

Of the 34 ministers in Hollande's government, three are Muslims. They include Najat Vallaud-Belkacem, Yamina Benguigui and Kader Arif.

Morocco born Belkacem, 34, has been appointed as the minister for women's rights, a position long missing from the French government.

The former presidential campaign spokesperson is also the government spokeswoman now.

The second Muslim Minister, Yamina Benguigui, Junior Minister for French Nationals Abroad is a French-Algerian film director. She is known for her films on gender issues in the North African immigrant community in France

The third Muslim minister is Kader Arif, the Junior Minister for Veterans who has been vocal in blaming Israel for French foreign affairs problems, saying Sarkozy's Mediterranean Union was blocked by Israeli actions in Gaza.

Hollande has appointed Jean-Marc Ayrault, a veteran social democrat and German expert, as his prime minister.

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AT&T fined for discriminating against Muslim Woman



at&t

American AT&T, a leader in telecommunication services, has been ordered to pay \$5 million in punitive damages for discrimination against a Muslim woman.

A jury in Jackson County Circuit Court ordered AT&T to pay \$120,000 in actual damages and \$5 million in punitive damages for discrimination against Susann Bashir, a Kansas City woman who converted from Christianity to Islam.

Susann, 41, had sued AT&T unit Southwestern Bell for a pattern of offensive and discriminatory conduct by supervisors following her conversion to Islam in 2005

She has been a network technician in the company for six years.

Bashir said in court documents that her work environment became hostile immediately after she converted, with her co-workers making harassing comments about her religion.

She said that when she started wearing a head scarf, her colleagues and manager started calling her names like "terrorist" and told her that she would be going to hell.

"I was shocked. I thought, what is going on? Nobody ever cared what I wore before. Nobody ever cared what religion I was before," she said.

Islamophobia and discrimination cases against Muslims have been increased in the United States over the past 11 years.

70,000 Italians Converted to Islam

According to the Union of Islamic communities in Italy (Ucoi) about 70,000 Italians converted to Islam, a real boom of conversions heightened by the crisis of values but also by the economic crisis in Italy, as Elzir Izzedine commented during the Youtube programme KlausCondicio, by the anchorman Klaus Davi, who is carrying out a report on the Italians espousing Islam.

Ucoi made known a few data: 70,000 Italians converted to Islam and what strikes most is the high number of Italians contacting Mosques to study Islam.

"It is an absolutely positive fact", Izzedine commented. "If you consider that there are already 150,000 Muslims with Italian citizenship and one million resident Muslims, you can understand that it is an unprecedented boom".

Bank Islam to Open 12 New Branches

BIMB Holdings Bhd, which owns 51 percent of Bank Islam Malaysia Bhd, plans to open 12 new Bank Islam branches by year-end.

"The first three branches will be opened by June in Bukit Jelutong, Cyberjaya and Ipoh," group managing director and chief executive officer Johan Abdullah told a press conference after the group's annual general meeting.

Bank Islam managing director Datuk Seri Zukri Samat said the group eyes a bigger market share and stronger local presence by widening its network.

"Our focus is to garner more current accounts and savings accounts by expanding our branches to places we have not been to," he said.

Last year, Bank Islam's assets and deposits were the third largest among the Islamic banking institutions, and it ranked fifth in terms of financing.

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Leaked memos reveal Bin Laden warned of mass hunger in Egypt



International economic sanctions on an Islamic Egypt would have led to mass hunger in the country of more than 85 million citizens, an Egyptian daily reported citing a memo by late al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.

In one of 17 documents released by the U.S.-based Combating Terrorism Center (CTC), Bin Laden cites the challenges facing Egypt's would-be Islamist rulers, the online edition of Egypt's al-Ahram daily reported.

The documents were seized from Bin Laden's residence in Abbottabad, Pakistan, where he was killed by U.S. special forces in May 2011.

"Before building a Muslim state, the Islamic Group [Jamaa Islamiya] could have thought about food security for the Egyptian people," Bin Laden wrote in one memo, referring to the Islamist group involved in the assassination of former Egyptian president Anwar al-Sadat.

Sadat was assassinated by the group during a military parade in Cairo on Oct. 6, 1981.

The group aimed at establishing an Islamic state in Egypt and planned to seize control of government buildings and media outlets. But Bin Laden claimed in his memo that their plans overlooked vital issues related to Egypt's

economy and food supply, according to al-Ahram report.

Bin Laden wrote: "If God had willed for the Islamic state to be born in Egypt, it would have not probably lasted more than a few weeks." He explained that international sanctions would have led to starvation due to the country's then reliance on American wheat.

Bin Laden claimed that, at that time, Egyptians relied on 150 million loaves of bread per day,

The comment reflected Bin Laden as someone willing to abandon his cherished dream of setting up an Islamic state in Egypt if the price was the welfare of the population.

Al-Qaeda leader asked "what would happen when Egypt could no longer import wheat from its major supplier, the United States?" He added that Egypt's wheat reserves were only enough for two weeks' worth of food and that its government had abandoned plans to make the country more self-sufficient.

According to the released memo, Bin Laden wondered: "How long would the public tolerate having to go without [bread]?" he asked. "That has nothing to do with whether the public liked or disliked the Islamic state. A dangerous shortage of food causes death and people do not want to see their children die of hunger." Egypt's first post-Mubarak presidential election is scheduled on May 23-24. Islamists are among the top contenders, including Muslim Brotherhood top figure Mohammed Mursi and ex-Brotherhood member Abdul Moniem Abul Fotouh.

Bin Laden said that -- unlike

Somalia or Afghanistan, where people could depend on agriculture and livestock -- Egypt could not survive the "unconventional weapon" of economic sanctions. "The Afghan population is considered to be outside the modern-state system, and unlike Arab populations," he wrote. The comment suggested a man somewhat different from the stereotype of a pitiless terrorist leader.

The documents, dating from September 2006 to April 2011, included 175 pages of emails and draft letters written in Arabic by several al-Qaeda figures, including Osama bin Laden himself.

The CTC had warned of possible problems with its English translations, and recommended that the documents should be read in the original language, according to the report published by al-Ahram.

Al-Ahram report cited the preface to CTC's study, published on its website, admitting that in contrast to his public statements that focused on the injustice of those he believed to be the "enemies" of Islam, namely "apostate" Muslim rulers and their Western "overseers," the focus of Bin Laden's private letters was Muslim suffering at the hands of their jihadi "brothers."

Bin Laden advised them to give up attacks that cause Muslim civilian casualties and focus on the "desired goal" which is the United States.

The released documents reflected Bin Laden's frustration with regional jihadi groups and his inability to control their actions, according to al-Ahram report.

Free distribution of braille Quran copies in France

Paris Églantine Islamic Institute in France has said it will freely distribute Quran copies in Braille among the visually impaired.

The institute's officials said the copies are in Arabic. They invited the visually impaired willing to obtain a copy to go to the institute.

In order to receive a copy of

the Quran in Braille, they need to present identification as well as documents showing they have mastery over Arabic Braille.

In order for best serving those needing the copies, distribution will be carried out in three phases, first among the visually impaired individuals who have full mastery

over Arabic Braille, second among those who are learning Arabic Braille and finally among mosques and Islamic centers.

Paris Églantine Islamic Institute is among the first Muslim Institutes established in Europe that serves people with physical disabilities.

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Australia's NSW plans to introduce Islamic financial system



The government of the Australian state of New South Wales, home to the country's financial capital Sydney, has put the introduction of the Islamic financial system on its agenda.

A delegation, led by New South Wales Premier Barry O'Farrell and including financial services

professionals will travel to Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, to discuss regulatory and legal issues with the Dubai Export Development Corp on Tuesday, official said.

"The event will discuss business opportunities in New South Wales, with particular attention given to

Islamic finance," an Australian government official, who declined to be identified, told Reuters.

Ratification of legislation governing the Islamic finance will require government involvement.

However, Salim Farrar, senior lecturer at the University of Sydney Law School said "The state government is very interested and trying to be proactive in getting Middle East and local players together to work out a deal."

Talal Yassine, managing director at Sydney-based Crescent Wealth said support for the Islamic finance system is building in the business community.

"Clearly there is going to be a push to get Islamic finance up in Australia," he noted.

Officials believe that given its proximity to Southeast Asia, where Islamic finance is growing rapidly, Australia could play a role in the Islamic finance industry.

First Hospital in India to Achieve Halal Certification

Global Health city, world class tertiary multi super specialty hospital, is the first hospital in India to receive the Halal Certification for its hospital services by Halal Development Corporation (HDC). This initiative will further help in boosting medical value travel from Muslim countries like SAARC, MENA and S.E Asian Region which constitutes around 75 percent share of patient traffic.

Dr. K. Ravindranath, Chairman & MD, Global Hospitals Group, said "With about two billion Muslims worldwide and a major number of international health travelers coming to Global Healthcity from the Islamic nations, we see Halal certification as a form of approval that boosts our patients' trust and confidence in our range of hospital services. To earn the certification, Global Health City had to meet strict Islamic guidelines dealing with hygiene & dietary regulations of global standards."

"This Halal certification will further help in boosting medical value travel in our country and showcasing our

world class infrastructure." He further added.

Mr. Mohamed Jinna, CEO, Halal India stated "We have great heritage for service and hospitality in India which also signifies that we can take good care of patients. The state of art technologies available in medical care is just perfect for overseas patients. All we need to do is understand their culture and custom so that we accommodate them well and make them feel truly at home" This way we can respect their values and belief and at the same time cater to this niche market in India."

Global Health City, Chennai is a 500 bedded super specialty tertiary care facility, with a capacity to expand to 1000 beds. It renders 360 degree advanced tertiary healthcare services with multi-super specialty and multi-organ transplant services. With the finest combination of expertise, experience, state-of-the art technology and well coordinated team work, every step is aimed at ensuring excellence in patient care.

The Global Hospitals Group started with its first Hospital a decade ago in Hyderabad. Today, it has nine hospitals with over 2000 beds, strategically spread across the country with branches now in Bangalore and Chennai and many more in advanced stages of planning and implementation, one such being the Mumbai facility which is proposed to be operational by the end of the current financial year. Each unit is a world class tertiary care multi super specialty Hospital with facilities matching the best in the world and offering advanced patient care of international standards.

Halal India is recognized by IHIA (International Halal Integrity Alliance, Malaysia) who is a partner of the Islamic Chamber of Commerce and Industry (Kingdom of Saudi Arabia). It has been recognized by the 57 OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference) Countries, in principle member with the World Halal Council and Intertek Testing Services, a testing company, are its global partners.

Muslim players get prayer rooms in Australia



Serving as Australian Football League multicultural ambassador, Richmond Muslim player Bachar Houli has welcomed a recent decision by the league to introduce multi-faith prayer rooms at playgrounds as respecting Australia's cultural diversity.

"At the end of the day, people want to go and enjoy the footy as well as continue with their beliefs," Houli told *The Australian*.

"If it means they have to pray once a day at the footy, we're not asking for much."

Praying before and after games, Houli has been pressing for prayer rooms to be introduced at grounds in his capacity as the league's multicultural ambassador.

Following the AFL's decision, multi-faith prayer rooms were introduced at the MCG and Etihad Stadium in Melbourne, and Sydney's ANZ Stadium.

As a devout Muslim, Houli says he was forced with other Muslim players to pray in carparks or stairwells during games.

He added that more Muslims would come to the football if they had a place to pray.

"The main thing is we've got what we want, and you can't change that," Houli said.

The league's decision won applause from the Australian Muslim community as respecting others' religious obligations.

The league's decision was welcomed by the AFL's newest club, Greater Western Sydney.

"Western Sydney is a culturally diverse region and the Giants welcome all people regardless of their background," the club said yesterday.

"We are proud of the contribution clubs like Muslim AFL team the Auburn Tigers have made to growing the game in Western Sydney, and the Giants would be happy to support any initiative which makes the game more accessible for all people."

AFL chief Andrew Demetriou said the league had an obligation to make venues welcoming to people of all cultures.

Muslims, who have been in Australia for more than 200 years, make up 1.7 percent of its 20-million population.

Islam is the country's second largest religion after Christianity.

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Qatar launches first Women's Basketball League

Qatar has launched its first ever Women's Basketball League in Doha, with ten teams competing to become national champions.

The six-week event, which is being organised and managed by the Qatar Women Sport Committee, will see teams playing a series of group games followed by a final stand-off during the first week of June.

Matches will take place at the Aspire Academy of Sports Excellence in Doha, and awards will be given to the top teams as well as the best junior and senior players.

Organisers say they want the event to become an annual fixture in the nation's sports events calendar.

"The athletes competing in this event will provide inspiration to

many more young girls in Qatar and throughout the Arab region," said the president of the Qatar Women Sport Committee, Ahlam Salem Al-Mana.

"With the progress we are making in the development of women's sport in Qatar, we are confident that this latest initiative will help a new generation of female athletes compete at an international level and ultimately become Olympians in many sporting disciplines."

Qatar's progress in promoting female sporting competition is in stark contrast to fellow Gulf nation Saudi Arabia, which recently confirmed that it would not be sending any women athletes to the London Olympic Games 2012.



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Prayer Rooms at Newcastle's Stadium for Muslim Stars



Toon manager says there are plans to create purpose-built religious rooms at the Sports Direct Arena and the club's training facility where Ben Arfa, Cisse and Ba can pray.

Demba Ba, Hatem Ben Arfa and Papiss Cisse are all devout Muslims and have been arguably the club's best players this season.

And Pardew has revealed that the religious beliefs held by these three players have played a key role in getting the club to their lofty position in the Premier League. He is even contemplating installing prayer rooms at the training facilities and the Sports Direct Arena.

He told The Mail on Sunday: "It's

something I've discussed with club secretary Lee Charnley as I think it's important. We look after the players and their religious backgrounds.

"Even at the stadium, it's not an ideal situation. It's something we're looking at. Religion plays an important role for some of our players.

"You have to respect that some players have a different religion to most of the footballers in this country. We need different facilities for them. It's important that whatever the religion, we take care of it and understand it."

The culture of the Premier League has changed over the years and the English top-flight is now home to a host of players who are adherents of the Muslim faith, including Yaya and Kolo Toure, Samir Nasri, Edin Dzeko, Ali Al-Habsi, Salomon Kalou, Mamady Sidibe and Marouane Chamakh.

Qatar Joins Ice Hockey Federation



Qatar has become the 72nd member of the International Ice Hockey Federation, it was announced at the organisation's annual congress.

The Qatar Ice Hockey Federation was founded in 2010 and is the third Gulf state to join the winter sports federation, following the UAE and Kuwait.

Qatar is currently home to just two ice rinks, both located in the capital of Doha: the Villagio Ice Rink in the Aspire Zone and the City Centre Ice Rink at West Bay.

The Qatari national league, which kicked off in the 2010/2011 season, includes five teams and 70 players affiliated to the Qatar Ice Hockey

Federation. In addition, an ice hockey school with more than 100 registered participants has been established.

The Gulf state was added along with the Caribbean nation of Jamaica.

"The dream is to once participate at the Olympics like the Jamaican bobsled

team in Calgary 1988 that became famous in the film 'Cool Runnings'," the IIHF said in a statement.

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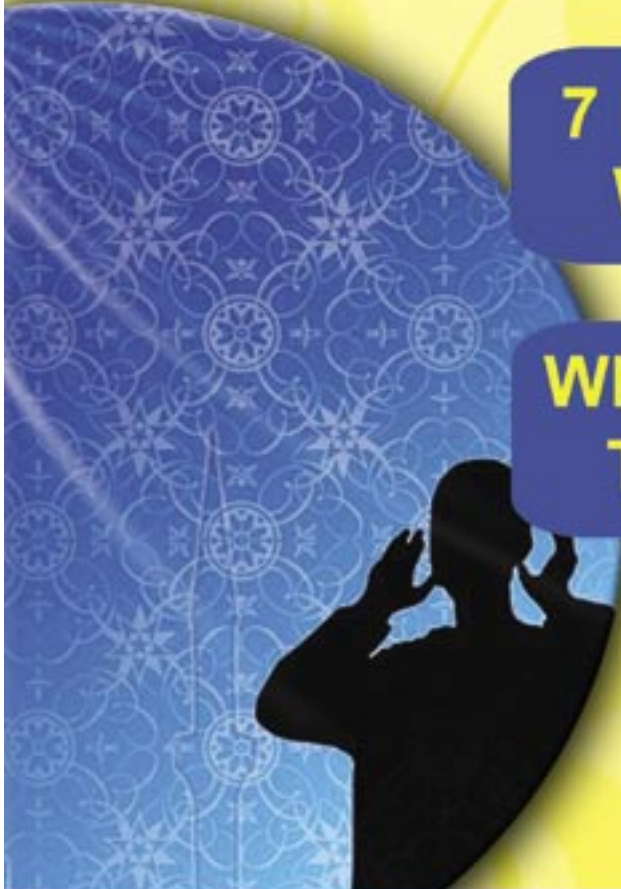




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Where is Allah?

[42:11]...Nothing is like Him (SWT). And He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.

The issue of "Where is Allah?" is something that was never debated or made a matter of dispute among the Muslims throughout the ages and eras. Unfortunately, due to immense ignorance about our deen, certain Muslims spend and waiste their precious time arguing about petty and trivial issues and forget about their real duties and responsibilities.

The belief (aqidah) one must have regarding his Lord and Creator is that Allah Almighty is One, there is nothing like Him, there is nothing that can overwhelm Him, there is no god besides Him and He is Eternal without a beginning and Enduring without end. He will neither perish nor come to an end and nothing happens except what He wills. No imagination can conceive of Him and no understanding can comprehend Him. He is different from any created being.

Allah Most High says about Himself: "There is nothing whatever unto like Him." (Surah al-Shura, 11).

And He says in Surah al-Ikhlās: "And there is none like unto Him." (112: 4).

Due to the above and other texts of the Qur'an and Sunnah, one of the major beliefs a Muslim must have regarding Allah Most High is that there is no creation that is similar to Him. If Allah is regarded to be similar or resemble or have any qualities of His creation, then that would constitute disbelief.

Imam Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (Allah have mercy on him) states:

"Whoever thinks that Allah has a body made of organs, then he is an idol-worshipper...Whosoever

worships a body is regarded a disbeliever by the consensus of all the scholars, the early scholars (salaf) and the late (muta'akhirun)" (I'lam al-Anam an Ilm al-Kalam, 6-8).

If one believes that there is nothing similar to Allah in any way, then his Aqidah is correct and there is no need for disputes and arguments. I believe that there isn't a Muslim that really believes that Allah is similar to his creation in any way, thus disputes and arguments must be avoided. Yes, if one does believe that Allah has hands, feet, face, etc... that is similar to his creation, then without doubt this person would come out of the fold of Islam.

Regarding the question, "where is Allah?"

Firstly, it should be remembered that this is not something that one will be asked about on the day of Qiyamah. We are in need of people really learning about the basics of Islam, rather than engaging themselves in these matters. Those that argue and cause destruction with such issues are normally ignorant about even the basics of Salat, Zakat, Hajj, etc... We need to really wake up and smell the coffee!

Secondly, this question in itself is wrong. We ask regarding the whereabouts of a person that lives in time and space. For example, I encompass time, meaning I live in time, and I have a body that needs to fill some space.

However, Allah, Mighty and Majestic, is the creator of time and space. If we limit Him to any time or space, then this would imply that we resemble Him to his creation by giving Him a body, as space is limited. If one was to say that Allah is everywhere, then this is wrong, as 'everywhere' is limited and ends

somewhere, whereas Allah is not limited.

Similarly, to say that Allah is on earth, sky, moon, sun, throne, etc... is also wrong, as all these things are limited and to limit Allah to any created thing is Kufr.

Imam al-Tahawi (Allah have mercy on him) states in his famous al-Aqida al-Tahawiyya:

"He (Allah) is beyond having limits placed on Him, or being restricted, or having parts or limbs. Nor is He contained by six directions as all created things are."

Imam al-Nasafi (Allah have mercy on him) states:

"He (Allah) is not a body (jism), nor an atom (jawhar), nor is He something formed (musawwar), nor a thing limited (mahdud), nor a thing numbered (ma'dud), nor a thing portioned or divided, nor a thing compounded (mutarakkab), nor does He come to end in Himself. He is not described by quiddity (al-ma'hiya), or by quality (al-kayfiyya), nor is He placed in space (al-makan), and time (al-zaman) does not affect Him. Nothing resembles Him, that is to say, nothing is like Him." (See: Sa'd al-Din al-Taftazani & Najm al-Din al-Nasafi, Sharh al-Aqa'id al-Nasafiyya, 92-97).

In conclusion, one must have the Aqidah that Allah Most High is pure from space and time. It is wrong to say that He is everywhere and it is also wrong to believe that He is on something, as all these are limited whereas Allah Almighty is limitless. However, we must believe that His knowledge encompasses everything, and he knows, sees and listens to everything.

And Allah Ta'ala Knows Best

By Shaykh Mufti Muhammad Ibn Adam (HA)

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How the Quran shapes the brain

“If it wasn’t for their political problems and constant fighting between each other, the Muslims would have been on the moon by the 1400’s” was the statement made by a non-Muslim professor in a 400-level undergraduate class on the history of science. It seems that the rate of discovery and advancement in science achieved by the Muslims was quite impressive and has yet to be replicated. What was it that they were doing that allowed for their fast progress?

The teacher in me immediately thinks about their education system, and the neuroscientist in me wants to examine the factors involved in shaping the brains of such a civilization. Interestingly, many Muslim religious scholars will say something about how the Muslims were the leaders when the Quran was the centre of their education, and only when they abandoned the Quran that they lost their reign. The amazing thing about this is that while Muslim religious scholars are typically talking about spiritual and moral realities, there is actually a material reality to what they’re saying, which takes place in the brain.

A quick disclaimer here: The list of all that is affected in the brain by the Quran and how that can influence other functions is quite exhaustive. But in the interest of keeping it short, I chose some major areas to present in this article.

Before getting into the brain and how the Quran changes it, one should be familiar with how traditional Muslim education took place. In case you’re wondering where I’m getting this from, it’s from reading the biographies of major figures of scholarship in the traditional Muslim world such as

Ibn Rushd, Ibn Sina, and others.

This is also based on my personal experience and what I have been told by some of my teachers.

The very first thing taught to an aspiring student was the Quran, which had to be memorized completely. Unlike anything else encountered in spoken Arabic, Quran recitation is a very specific science. Local dialects of Arabic or different ways of pronunciation are not permitted when reciting the Quran. In fact, part of learning the Quran is learning what is called in Arabic *tajweed*, which means elocution. The very first thing the student must do is replicate exactly how the teacher is reciting the verse. This refers to where individual letter sounds are being generated in the mouth and throat and where the tongue is to be placed exactly. Once this is done, the student writes the verse on a wooden board in the Othmani script, which follows different spelling rules than regular Arabic writing. The student then takes his board and goes away to memorize the verse. A typical memorization session for a beginner starts with repeating one verse multiple times as it is read on the board to also memorize how it is spelled using the Othmani script. The next day the student reviews the verse several times before returning to the teacher to receive the following verse. After repeating it with the teacher to ensure exact replication of sound and pronunciation, the student writes the new verse and goes away to begin a new memorization session.

The third day begins with reviewing the first verse one final time, followed by the second verse several times before going to receive the third verse. On the fourth day the

first verse is not reviewed anymore as it would have taken hold in memory, and the second verse takes its place for being reviewed while the third verse is repeated several times before going to receive the fourth verse. At the end of the week is a complete review session for everything that was memorized in the previous days.

As the days pass the capacity for memorization increases and the student is able to take on several verses or even pages at a time instead of only one or two verses. The writing using Othmani spelling continues, as well as the review sessions. Eventually, the whole Quran having more than 6,200 verses is memorized word for word with their specific pronunciation and Othmani spelling. Now the hard task begins as the student works to review all the verses on a monthly basis so as to not forget them. This usually means taking the 30 parts of the Quran as it has been divided to facilitate memorization, and reviewing one part every day until all 30 have been recited by the end of the month.

It should be mentioned here that the Quran has 10 different modes of recitation. This refers to the placement of diacritical marks on the words and how certain words are pronounced. Some students take this task on and memorize the Quran in all the different modes of recitation, which requires a very careful attention to where the pronunciations are different so they’re not confused with each other given how subtle they sometimes can be.

There are a couple of important qualities about the Quran that relates to how it sounds. Verses in the Quran rhyme and change rhythm

often, which gives a pleasurable effect to the listener. Furthermore, as one recites, they're supposed to sing it rather than simply read it. In fact, the very practice of Tajweed (elocution) forces the reciter into a singing tone as they enunciate the words of each verse.

A final note to bring up is in regards to the Arabic language and writing in Othmani script. Part of studying the different modes of recitation requires the student to write not only in an unusual spelling, but also to exclude the diacritical marks from the words. This would allow the student to learn the variations of recitation without having the diacritical marks visually interfere with their memorization of different modes of recitation. Moreover, the grammar of the Arabic requires the proper use of diacritical marks in pronunciation so as to not confuse things such as the subject and predicate. This means that the one learning the Quran must always keep track of how the words are enunciated so as to not alter the overall meaning of the verse.

How all of this relates to the brain is quite impressive. The brain is recognized to be a malleable organ that can change its connections and even its size of certain areas based on how active they become. Understanding how involved the brain is of someone learning the Quran using the traditional Muslim method can explain how they were able to achieve such success in their knowledge endeavours.

While learning the Quran, the careful attention to listening and pronunciation of verses stimulates an area of the brain located in the temporal lobe. The temporal lobe is also where the hippocampus is located, which is the memory consolidation centre. It's also the brain region activated for processing of musical sounds such as the case when the Quran is recited. Moreover, it becomes involved when the student engages in handwriting exercises similar to the ones on the wooden board. Where this matters is that this is the part of the brain whose activity levels and capacities have been

correlated with a person's aptitude for learning new information.

The more activation this area receives, and the more involved this activation is such as the case with the Quran, the better and more efficient it becomes in its functions for learning and memory.

The parietal lobes are also quite heavily engaged as one learns the Quran. The left parietal lobe deals with reading, writing, and functions in speech. It's also the part whose activity is important for math and logic problems. The right parietal lobe handles speech tone, which is related to elocution. It's also responsible for visuo-spatial relationships and understanding facial expressions. The front part is responsible for the sense of touch discrimination and recognition, which is active during handwriting. The back part plays an important role in attention. Both lobes are also activated during skill learning tasks. Overall, having parietal lobes that have been well activated translates to better logic and math-solving skills, eloquence in general speech, better ability at reading emotional states from facial cues, improved attention, and enhanced capacity for understanding visuo-spatial relationships. This last one can explain why Muslims were so good at astronomy.

Other brain regions the activity of Quran recitation strongly activate are the frontal lobes and the primary motor cortex. The frontal lobes activity deals with higher order functions, including working memory, memory retrieval, speech production and written-word recognition, sustained attention, planning, social behaviour, in addition to others. For example, as the student is reading the Othmani script, his brain must quickly decide on the proper pronunciation of the word, which without the diacritical marks means it must be distinguished from other possibilities that include not only wrong words, but also wrong enunciation depending on the specific recitation he's using out of the 10 valid ones. The amazing thing about this is that the brain after practice will do these things without conscious control from the student. This trains

the area of the brain responsible for inhibition, which is important for social interaction. Children with ADHD have been shown to have this area to be under-developed.

Given the Quran's content that for example includes descriptions of individuals and places, it activates the occipital lobes, which are involved in generating mental imagery. This brain region is also important in visual perception. Becoming active as a result of generating mental imagery indirectly improves visual perception capacities since the area activated is within the same region. The Quran is also rich in its content for history, parables, and logical arguments, all of which recruit different areas that become more efficient and better connected as they are continually activated due to the consistent review sessions.

Putting all this together, it's no wonder Muslims were able to make such vast contributions to human knowledge in a relatively short amount of time, historically speaking. After the aspiring student during the height of Muslim rule has mastered the Quran, his education in other sciences began by the time he was in his early teenage years. Given the brain's malleable nature, the improved connections in one region indirectly affect and improve functions in adjacent locations. The process in studying the Quran over the previous years has trained his brain and enhanced its functions relating to visual perception, language, working memory, memory formation, processing of sounds, attention, skill learning, inhibition, as well as planning just to name a few. Now imagine what such an individual will be able to do when they tackle any subject. It makes sense how someone like Imam Al Ghazali can say he studied Greek philosophy on the side during his spare time and mastered it within 2 years.

What was the Muslims' secret for their exponential rise in scientific advancement and contribution to human knowledge? Literally, the Quran when it was the centre of their education system.

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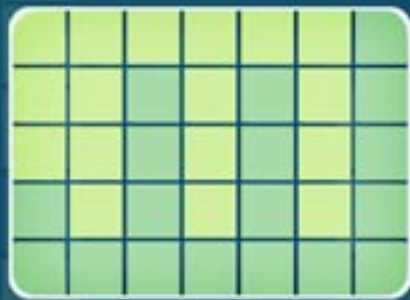
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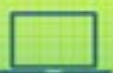
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