



# IOS NEWSLETTER

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## Thought for the Month

Those who avoid  
Great sins and indecent deeds,  
Save lesser offences,-  
Verily your Lord is ample  
In forgiveness. He knows  
You well when He brings  
You out of the earth,  
And when you are hidden  
In your mother's wombs  
Therefore hold not yourselves  
purified:  
He knows best who it is  
That guards against evil

Al-Quran-53:32

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## FOCUS

In my own limited knowledge, I know of no specialized studies in our classical legacy that could be described today as political thought, or as treatises on political systems, international relations, systems of government, the history of diplomacy, political development, methods of political analysis, political theory, political planning, or any of the other categories currently studied as a part of contemporary knowledge.

Nonetheless, many of the issues raised in these subjects were treated in the classical legacy through the medium of fiqh (laws of Islam), which, in its long history, touched upon many of the subjects studied today in the social sciences. Likewise, many of the questions dealt with in political science were addressed by the early scholars of Islam within the framework of the classical fiqh *al-ahkam al-sunniyyah* (the precepts of power). Perhaps Ibn Taymiyyah's *Al-Siyasah al-Shar'iyyah*, was one of the most distinctive efforts in this direction, as well as al-Khatib al-Iskafi's *Lutf al-Tadbir*, which also dealt with certain issues that remain relevant today. Similar to such works are *Suluk al-Malik fi Tadbir al-Mamalik*, *Bada'i al-Silk*, and others.

These works show that the meaning of politics to the Muslim mind, and, as envisioned by Islam, involves making arrangements for humanity in accordance with the values prescribed by Allah, to realize His purposes in creation and to fulfil the trust of vicegerency, the duties of civilization, and the responsibility of the Ummah to act as a witness to humanity in its capacity as the "middlemost nation."

"Making arrangements" includes reading the past and learning its lessons, as well as interpreting, understanding, and analyzing the present in the light of those lessons. Other elements include planning for the future and benefiting from all scientific knowledge that clarifies the particularities of the present. In such an endeavour, a certain kind of penetrating, striving intellect is necessary. This particular kind of genius and ability is what the *fuqaha'* called *fiqh al-nafs* (inherent religious/legal acumen), an attribute of someone for whom understanding and analytical capacity have become second nature.

Significant challenges confront Muslim scholars of political science. Two fundamental issues often prevent the development of a comprehensive and objective view of matters. First, these scholars have an inherent difficulty in separating the political aspect from other scholarly aspects (e.g., the sources of Islam [the Qur'an and Sunnah], the source-methodology employed to interpret these texts, or the comprehensiveness of fiqh legislation). It is difficult, perhaps impossible, to place well-defined divisions among these aspects as is done today with the social sciences.

This point was made all the more obvious by the recent experiences of certain Islamic universities that have newly established departments of *al-siyasah al-shar'iyyah* (the science of Shari'ah-based principles and conduct of government). They have had a very difficult time presenting material on political science in the Islamic tradition in a methodical manner befitting the educational and academic purposes for which they were established. Indeed, such factors as the models of application from Islamic history, the variety of experience in terms of how closely (or otherwise) these models approximated the stated Islamic ideal, the traditional scholars' different positions vis-à-vis such models all give credence to the statement that Islamic culture and learning are bereft of a science of Islamic political thought.

## Activities of the IOS Headquarters

### Lecture on Empowerment of Muslims Through Education

Renowned expert on education Prof. Mohammad Akhtar Siddiqui delivered a thought-provoking lecture on 21.11.2009 at IOS auditorium on Empowerment of Muslims Through Education in the Light of National Knowledge Commission and Yashpal Committee reports as well as according to the provisions of the Right to Education Act.

Prof. Siddiqui, who is the Chairperson of National Council for Teachers Education (NCTE), said that these three had enough provisions for the educational uplift of minorities. However, apathy on the part of bureaucracy and the Muslim community itself often prevents the beneficiaries from getting full advantage of the provisions.

However, Prof. Siddiqui hastened to add that most government officials, especially at the higher levels, were cooperative and genuinely wanted to help. He said that a lot of schemes, central and state-level, were there in operation for minorities as a whole.

He explained that for the first time government had started educational schemes exclusively for Muslims. He regretted that Muslims by and large were self-centred and indifferent to the education of the community. He said two major initiatives were taken by the government – one in 1986 and another in 1992 – for educational uplift of minorities by launching several schemes.

Many schemes did not succeed, but that should not deter us from continuing the endeavour, he added.

IOS Chairman Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam came in the later half

of the programme to join the programme largely as a listener.

A lively panel discussion ensued after the lecture. Dr Ausaf Ahmad, editor, *Mutaaliaat* and Mushtaq Ahmad, advocate Supreme Court, contributed the economic and legal perspective. A question-answer session followed.

Secretary General of IOS



Prof. MA Akhtar Siddiqui delivering his views

announced that a day-long workshop would be organised soon on the subject. Dr Nikhat Hussein Nadvi compered the programme.

### Seminar on "The Ethics of Disagreement in Islam"

A two-day national seminar on "Ethics of Disagreement in Islam", jointly organised by the Centre for Arabic and Islamic Studies, Institute of Objective Studies (IOS), New Delhi and Jamia Imam Anwer Deoband, was convened on November 13, 2009 at Jamia Imam Anwer Deoband (UP). It was presided over by renowned Islamic scholar and All India Milli Council (AIMC) President Maulana Abdullah Mughaisi while Dr Saud Alam Qasmi, Dean, Faculty of Theology (Sunni), AMU, Aligarh, and Prof Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, former Chairman, Islamic Studies, AMU and famous author, delivered their inaugural and key-note addresses, respectively.

In his inaugural address Prof. Saud Alam Qasmi said "the doctrinal differences between Muslims is not on the fundamentals, but on secondary and less important issues". He advised Muslims to forge unity on the basis of the fundamentals and develop a common stand on the basis of mutual consultations.

The two-day seminar, beginning on November 12, was attended by the luminaries of the world-renowned Darul Uloom Deoband, including Maulana Nematullah Aazmi, Mufti Sayeed Ahmad Palanpuri, Sheikh-al-Hadith Darul Uloom Deoband, and Maulana Reyasat Ali Bijnori.

Islamic scholars from India's centres of learning like Hyderabad, Delhi and Lucknow also addressed the seminar. The following representatives of India's Islamic organisation participated in the seminar: Maulana Mohammad Rafiq Qasmi, Secretary Jamaat-e-Islami Ahl-e-Hadith Hind and Maulana Muhammad Abdullah Mughaisi, President All India Milli Council.

Mufti Sayeed Ahmad Palanpuri pointed out the difference of opinion did not mean opposition in fiqh.

In his brief address Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam explained the objectives of the seminar. Nearly all speakers emphasised the point in their own way that maslak (school of thought) should not replace deen (religion) and difference of opinion should not lead to mutual takfir (repudiation).

Everybody at the seminar recognised that the "Ummah has an abundance of different perspectives, which cannot be wished away". The need of the hour, they pointed out, was to initiate dialogue between different masalik and points of view.

The welcome address was delivered by the rector of Jamia Imam Mohammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Syed Ahmad Khizr Shah, and a comprehensive introduction of the IOS was made by Dr Ghitrif Shabaaz Nadvi.

Among the prominent scholars who presented their papers were Prof. Ali Mohammad Naqvi of Department of Islamic Theology (Shi'a) Aligarh Muslim University, Mufti Mohammad Zafar Alam Nadvi, Dr Obaidullah Fahad Falahi and Maulana Nadeemul Wajdi.

The valedictory session was attended, among others, by Dr Fahim Akhtar Nadvi, Mufti Majdul Quddus Khabib Rumi and Prof. Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui. Prof. Siddiqui presided over the last session and Prof. Ausaf Ahmad read out the following proposals and resolutions:

1. The two-day seminar has reached the conclusion that differences among Islamic scholars on different aspects of principles of Islam are possible. According to it, these differences are not related to its basics and fundamentals and only exist in opinions of different schools of thought and other issues like schools of thought, mystic thoughts and practices, and trivia. In the view of the seminar, the realization and identification of the existence of these differences in opinions is a big step in the way of creating mutual understanding and harmony.
2. The seminar lauded the efforts made by the IOS, New Delhi and Jamia Imam Anwar Deoband in connection with its preparation. It hoped that such efforts would also be made by other Islamic

educational and research institutions.

3. The seminar expected that a congenial atmosphere to promote the culture of mutual talks and



L-R: Maulana Abdul Wahab Khilji, Prof Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, Maulana Abdullah Mughaisi, Dr Mohammad Manzoor Alam, Maulana Ahmad Shah Khizr Masoodi, Maulana Abdul Rasheed Bastawi

dialogue would be created in the educational institutions of the Indian Muslims.

4. The seminar appealed to different schools of thoughts and groups of Indian Muslim society to initiate a



A view of Audience

dialogue to remove their differences based on the real Islamic teachings and concepts. However, even after this effort if they feel that there still remain some real and permanent differences, they should strive to tolerate and live with these differences.

5. The seminar hoped that such other meetings would be helpful in removing the differences and encouraging unity among the Indian Muslims.

## IOS Computer Learning Centre Inaugurated

The IOS Centre for Computer Learning for Girls' was inaugurated on 22.11.2009. The Centre has been opened with the assistance of Delhi Minorities Commission. The Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Kamal Farooqui addressed the audience as Chief Guest and urged them to make use of the various schemes which are being run for the minorities, especially for the Muslims. Dr. M. Manzoor Alam, Chairman, IOS, presided over the function and during his address highlighted the

importance of knowledge and its acquisition in the light of the verses of the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (Pbuh). He also urged the students, both male and female, to fully benefit from such schemes. Prof. M. Ishtiaq of Department of Geography, Jamia Millia Islamia, who is Director of this project, conducted the programme. He introduced the Computer Centre and said that its purpose was to impart computer education to the Muslim girls. Speaking on the occasion Prof. Z.M.

Khan introduced the IOS, its objectives and programmes and thanked the chair, the chief guest and the audience.

### Announcements

**Book Release Ceremony**  
*Readings on Minorities (ROM) Vol. IV*  
 (January 6, 2010 at 4:00 p.m.)  
 Venue: Deputy Speaker Hall,  
 Constitution Club, Rafi Marg  
 New Delhi

*Mr. Justice AM Ahmadi, former Chief Justice of India shall preside over this function*

## International Conference on Islam's contribution to World Civilisation

(January 16-17, 2010)

Venue: Muslim Social Service (MSS)  
Auditorium, Chrooty Road,  
Calicut-673001 Kerala

### Organizers:

Institute of Objective  
Studies, New Delhi & IOS  
Calicut Chapter, Kerala

Dr. Imad Ad Deen Ahmad,  
USA shall present Key  
Note address

### Other Important Delegates:

Prof. Z.M. Khan Secretary  
General, IOS,  
Prof.(Dr)Jamaluddin,  
Academic Director, IOS,  
Prof. Refaqt Ali Khan,  
Former Head Dept of History, JMI,  
New Delhi, Dr Ausaf Ahmad Editor,  
Mutaaleaat, New Delhi, Prof. A.R.  
Momin, Former Head Dept. of  
Anthropology, Mumbai University,  
Mumbai, Prof. P. Koya, Calicut, Prof.  
Yasin Mazhar Siddiqui, Prof Abdul  
Ali, Dept. of Islamic Studies, AMU,  
Aligarh, Dr. J. Rajamohamad,  
Chennai shall participate in the  
conference.

### Concept Note

Islam has made brilliant contribution to world civilization. Monotheistic religion as it is, Islamic beliefs have sought the unity of all human beings as the creation of the Only One Creator Who Alone is the Sustainer of the universe. Through the '99 Attributes of Allah' (Al-asma al-husna), human beings can see what a beautiful world Islam seeks to establish. The Holy Qur'an insists on exploring the world around, which is gifted with innumerable bounties for the well-being of the human kind. 'Ilm or knowledge therefore is integrated into the lifestyle of the followers of Islam.

With the expansion of Islam, Muslims crossed over frontiers and came across different civilizations.

Iranian and Greco-Roman civilizations were among the first civilization they encountered and imbibed the good features of each civilization, thus making way for the evolution of a world civilization. Conquest and trade and commerce were the main agencies for creating a



Mr. Kamal Farooqui, Chairman, Delhi Minorities Commission  
inaugurating the IOS Centre for Computer Learning Centre for Girl's

world order.

Islam's attitude towards education, learning and scientific thinking is very positive. It encourages its followers to learn, read, write and engage in research. Taking inspiration from their faith to go in the pursuit of knowledge, it is not therefore strange that the Muslim scholars have made contribution in almost all fields of knowledge and the contribution has been acknowledged in all parts of the world.

There are several sciences and disciplines which owe their origin or improvement to the Muslims, such as trigonometry, algebra, geometry, physics, chemistry, geography, historiography, astronomy, medical science, pharmacology, etc. In art, architecture and music too, Muslims excelled and were responsible for taking these forms forward, laying the foundation of several schools in these fields across the Islamic world. Great architectural monuments, mosques, tombs, forts and palaces in particular, covering surface across the Islamic world boast of achievements in building techniques and are considered marvels in terms of aesthetics they are embellished with. Master artists in Iran, Central Asia

and India produced miniatures, portraiture and illustrations, now preserved in world museums, which speak volumes about their unparalleled skills in these forms of art. Celebrated Arab calligraphers wrote as many as fifty different Arabic scripts. Arab calligraphy reached its zenith during the Abbasid period. Later, the Persians developed Arabic calligraphy to a high degree of perfection. Calligraphy attracted royal patronage in India. The Mughal emperor Akbar is said to have rejected the printing press declaring it an eyesore.

In minor arts, Muslim artisans are said to have preserved, developed and spread the traditional arts and crafts. Muslim artisans developed pottery of clay and glass to a high standard of perfection. The Muslim goldsmiths and craftsmen excelled in metal work, introducing several novelties in engraving, carving and floral designs. In wood, ivory, decorated tiles, glass works, leather binding and carpet weaving too, Muslim artisans achieved excellence.

What inspired the Muslims most to study and develop various sciences and learning and what led them to practice different forms of arts and crafts should be our main focus. Faith, conquests and trade-commerce related activities, which widened the horizon of the faithful, constituted one source of inspiration. Islamic belief in the Oneness of Allah promoted egalitarianism, that is the belief that everyone is equal and enjoys the same rights, and that every man, irrespective of his social status, is accountable to the Supreme Authority for all his deeds. Conquests led to the creation of vast political entities which enforced central authority by introducing uniform administrative practices. Medieval political authority extended generous patronage to science and learning, supported trade and commerce and promoted various

arts. Muslims were not hostile to indigenous people or their culture in the lands they settled in. In many instances, it will be found that the conquering Muslims were conquered by the culture of the conquered. Imbibing the elements of local culture into what they had inherited from their own ancestors, Muslims further developed sciences, all forms of learning and arts, giving them their own stamp.

Islamic religio-spiritual practices have given to the entire world an ethical order emphasizing human values which are universal. The humane aspect of Islam needs to be asserted to remove all misconceptions being spread by irresponsible media.

It is an accepted truth that the Muslim civilization inspired the European Renaissance. The Muslims who were pioneers in almost all branches of learning led the West in different disciplines. Thus, the mission of mankind was accomplished by Muslims. Despite the Crusades, the Westerners continued their trade relations with the East. Trade promoted the growth of urban centres, introducing a progressive element in the West. Commercial activities brought back, from the Muslim lands, science and culture to Europe, thereby helping the creation and growth of remarkable intellectual revival of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In the light of this note, scholars are invited to contribute their research articles highlighting Islam's contribution to world civilization. In the context of Islam taking an ever-rising battering from its adversaries, it is necessary that Islam's contributions are once again put in a global perspective.

#### **Sub-themes:**

Scholars may consider any of the following sub-themes for their presentation. The sub-themes point out to important trends/developments, which helped in putting the stamp of Islam on world civilization.

#### **1. Islamic beliefs and concepts impacting on human behavior:**

Islamic beliefs and the concepts of the unity of all human beings, irrespective of their race or nationality, and accountability to the Supreme Authority have deeply affected human behavior. How Islamic beliefs and concepts are illustrated in human behavior is a subject of research.

#### **2. Islamic ethical code impacted on social order:**

Islamic ethical code takes inspiration from the 99 Attributes of Allah, which seek to establish a value-oriented social order. Islamic concepts of moderation, modesty, egalitarianism, accommodation, forgiveness, compassion, peace and harmony show to the world that an ideal society could be created.

#### **3. Impact of Qur'an on social well-being:**

There is need to highlight Qur'anic injunctions with regard to establishing a strong family based on individual's rights and duties and a social order based on justice.

#### **4. Assimilation:**

Islamic spirit led to a long process of assimilation and synthesis in all the lands where Islam reached. This historical process deserves our attention.

#### **5. Islam's contribution towards spreading knowledge:**

Islam always promoted the acquisition of knowledge. It goes to the credit of Muslim Arabs that they inherited, preserved and improved Greek knowledge, and passed it on to posterity. In this context, Islam's contribution to various sciences needs reappraisal.

#### **6. Islam and the Renaissance:**

Islamic sources of inspiration for the revival of knowledge in Europe (i.e. Renaissance) need to be identified.

#### **7. Impact of Conquests:**

Conquests aimed to create a world order; several empires came into being which were spread over vast lands and consisted of multi-cultural, multi-racial societies. The political

expansion led to the creation of a centralized authority with strong and effective political and administrative institutions which survived until the rise of colonialism. These aspects have to be revealed to show the political genius of the Islamic world.

#### **8. Promotion of trade and commerce:**

Promotion of trade and commerce connected several civilizations in the East and the West with each other, thereby transforming the world into a civilized society. Further, conquests and trade and commerce encouraged the process of assimilation, synthesis and co-existence.

#### **9. Agents of Assimilation:**

Art, architecture, minor arts and crafts, and music best illustrate the process of assimilation throughout the Islamic world, showing that Muslims firmly believe in the principle of co-existence and social harmony.

#### **10. Urbanisation, a gift of Islam:**

For political and administrative reasons, Muslims created urban centres in all those lands where they permanently settled. Trade and industry further strengthened these urban centres. Role of Islam in urbanization needs to be studied.

#### **11. Spiritualism and assimilation:**

Religio-spiritual practices further strengthened the process of assimilation. Whether we agree or not, there is no doubt that spiritualism taking inspiration from the Holy Qur'an and the Hadith struck a chord with the indigenous peoples, languages and cultures. This led to, for example, the cultivation of languages.

#### **Condition of Muslims in West Bengal: A Comment by Dr. M.K.A. Siddiqui**

Constituting over 10.6 million or 25.2 per cent of the total population of West Bengal, 84.26 per cent of the Muslims are rural based while 15.74 per cent live in urban areas. Those in the rural areas are predominantly peasants and agricultural labour. In

the city they are mainly artisans and handi-craftsmen as well as small traders.

Over 75 per cent of the Muslims in Kolkata live in slums or bustees as they are called, in unimaginably bad housing condition around Central Business District, while a substantial number of the rest inhabit the older areas which do not differ from the slums. The living condition of the vast bulk of the Muslims can be judged from the fact that 67 per cent of the Muslim families, of the average size of 6.65 occupy from 67 sq.ft. - 140 sq.ft. of space in which they live and work, engaging themselves in various crafts.

The occupational structure of the Muslims in the city differ sharply from that of the non-Muslims, in so far as Muslims are not only left to themselves for their own support but quite often face challenge from the socio political system and often get dislodged from some of the comparatively more profitable niche they create for themselves.

According to a survey of age grades in the Muslim population numbering 926,769 in the city those from 6-18 years constituting about 40 per cent or numbering 307000 are supposed to be normally in educational institution, but their enrollment figure did not exceed 15000 or 4 per cent, and if we take into account all sorts of makhtabs, madrasas, private schools, the enrollment figure does not exceed 9 per cent. Thus 91 per cent of the boys and girls have no chance of going to school and their socio-economic condition does not allow them to do so.

A large proportion of the lucky 4 per cent or 15000 who have the good fortune of getting admission in affiliated schools get dropped out before reaching school final stage. The dropped out have been estimated to be 80 per cent of the total number enrolled. It is tragic that not less than 75 per cent of the total number of Muslim children of school going age serve as child labour absolutely unhindered by the administration.

The educational attainment of the Muslims in Kolkata naturally was found to be as follows:

1. 16.95 per cent can only sign
2. 14.19 per cent have read up to primary level
3. 06.23 per cent have read up to secondary level
4. 02.75 per cent have read up to higher secondary level
5. 0.17 per cent have read up to graduate level or above

But what is the cause for a greater worry is the fact that the rate of literacy of Muslims in Kolkata is much lower today than what it was on the eve of Independence in 1947.

This is not the occasion to go back to the historical developments leading to a systematic downward mobility of the Muslims in the area and recession of their 'social expectation' that adversely affected their educational achievement. How they were simply made a tool in the hands of the dominant to be utilized in their socio-economic endeavour. Muslims had taken this trend as their destiny until very recent past.

Today they are gaining a vague consciousness of the gigantic problems that confronts them, which is larger in proportion to the resources at their disposal. They are also not aware of the path that can lead them to achieve the goal without complications.

This socio-economic profile of the decisive bulk of the community in a region dealt with by the Kolkata chapter obviously differs from most of the other regions in details and would obviously demand action programme that takes note of the issues involved.

The plight of the people of this region is not only reflected in extremely bad living condition, political disempowerment, negligible employment in the organized sector, low level of literacy and education, marginality of their occupational pursuit and incredibly bad housing condition, but also the fact that they are the victims of the most

sophisticated form of parochialism that shelters behind modernity and secularism.

The key to the solution lies in correct understanding through hard and irrefutable facts and motivating and enabling the members of the community to take appropriate action for their solution.

The role of the IOS in keeping watchful eyes on the causes and their effects and on changing situation and in bringing forth correct information and knowledge and disseminating them widely is unique and perhaps unavoidable. Some of the functions of the Kolkata Chapter in the field have received appreciation though not as widely as it was desirable and necessary.

#### *Contd. from page 1*

Second, this intellectual void forced the imposition, by default, of the West's political perspective and experience a authoritative sources in the field of Islamic political science. Yet this political perspective is based on values that, when applied by Muslim scholars, actually impede their understanding of the Islamic political system. In addition, those values are suitable agents for change or development in an Islamic context. Among the most prominent values espoused by western thought, and those that obstruct an understanding of the proper Islamic perspective, are the following:

- Islam is a religion like any other, and therefore, it should not differ in any significant way from the Christianity of the Middle Ages in Europe, in the sense that the church was duty-bound to stand in the way of progress. From this perspective, human development and progress only became possible after the split between church and state. After a long and bitter struggle, the West emerged triumphant over the church and all that it represented. Thus, it is inconceivable that a Westerner could imagine a link between knowledge and religion, to say nothing of accepting the concept of basing the humanities and social

sciences on religion or giving them a religious perspective.

- Islam is a religion, and religion, which relies solely on revelation, relegates reason and empirical knowledge to marginal roles. Proponents of such a view consider it absurd to suggest that a social science could be based on religion, particularly a discipline like political science, which gives weight to human experience and empirical knowledge.

- The sources of religion, which are based on revelation, are thus subject to interpretation primarily by means of the language in which the religion was revealed. Therefore, determining its truths is said to depend entirely on that language.

- The sources of religion are historical, in the sense that they are linked with the events of a particular time. According to this view, the historicity of those sources stands between any serious academic work produced within the framework of that religion and, furthermore, negates any attempt at generalization.

These misconceptions demand that contemporary Muslim political scientists, today more than ever, mobilize all available resources to pursue the introduction of a revolution of thought in the Ummah and establish sound academic foundations for an Islamic science of Shari'ah-based principles and conduct of government. In this way, Muslims may regain their identity and be encouraged to work for the Ummah's regeneration as an influential international power capable of wresting the reins of leadership from the forces of evil and from self-assumed superiority on Earth.

(From "Issues in Contemporary Islamic Thought" by Shaykh Taha Jabir Al-Alwani, pp. 229-230)

*Contd. from page 8*

Well, economic or any other material benefit, should not be the basis for leaving one religion for the other but, at the same time, it should not be used

to make any one captive of a particular religion. Moreover, the Sangh Parivar must realize that many rich Dalits also embrace Islam and Christianity, hence material inducement can not be the reason for their conversion. It is probably their perpetual, unchangeable low status that compels them to change their religion.

### **IOS Calendar 2010**

The IOS calendar 2010 has been published. Agents, shop-keepers and others may place their order with the IOS Headquarters.

The four-page calendar has the following features:

**Page 1** World Spread of Islam (By 1<sup>st</sup> Decade of 21<sup>st</sup> Century)

**Page 2** World Health (Life Expectancy) 1990 (A Comparison of 1990-2006)

**Page 3** India: Urban Poverty 2004-5 (In Percentage) A Comparison of various Social Groups

**Page 4** India: Rural Poverty 2004-5 (In Percentage) A Comparison of various Social Groups

The calendar may also be obtained from:

**Qazi Publishers & Distributors**  
B-35, Nizamuddin West  
**New Delhi-110013, Tel.: 011-24352732**

**Price per calendar: Rs. 25/-**  
(include packing, excludes postage)  
**US \$ 1 (include packing, excludes postage)**

#### **SUBSCRIPTION**

**Annual : Rs. 20/- \$ 5**

**Five Years: Rs. 75/- \$ 15**

## Delayed But Welcome

by Ishtiyaque Danish

The views expressed in the article do not necessarily reflect the editorial policy of the Newsletter (editor)

Whether bowing to the persistent demand of some opposition parties or owing to its own political calculations, the UPA government has tabled the Ranganath Misra Commission report in the Parliament. While submitting the report to the House, Minister of Minority Affairs, Salman Khurshid said that no 'action taken' report was required as it was not mandatory. Some secular opposition parties, however, suggested that an "action taken" report would have served the purpose in a more meaningful manner.

The tabling of the Misra report was long overdue. Well, many of its contents were leaked to the media long ago and, therefore, were well known. But tabling the report in the Parliament on 18<sup>th</sup> December means that the government was serious about implementing its recommendations.

But perhaps it would not be an easy ride for the government. For, the Misra Commission report is not merely about giving reservations to the Muslims within the 27% OBC quota. In fact, any impression if the Misra report was pro-Muslim would not only be misplaced but also dangerous. The report contains many things some of which may disturb the champions of OBC reservation as well. The report, for example, has criticized the government's failure to purge the list of OBCs of those castes that have moved forward in life and can not be considered as backward any longer. As a result the list of OBCs has not only become fat but has also been defeating the very purpose for which the reservation was originally sought: improving the conditions of the poor among the backward castes. The 'forward among the backward' make maximum utilization of the opportunities offered by the OBC reservation leaving little space for the poor of their class to strive for improving his lot. This purging should have taken place in 2003 but the government could not muster enough courage to fulfil its constitutional obligations; instead it added a few more relatively rich castes to the OBC list.

The present OBC leaders, such as Lalu and Mulayam, have ostensibly welcome the tabling of the report in the Parliament. But there may be others, or they may emerge, to oppose it because it has proposed 8% reservation for minorities within the 27% OBC quota. Of the 8% two per cent will be for non-Muslims and 6% for the Muslims because they constitute an overwhelming majority among the minorities. The Misra panel's argument is that the Muslims have very poor representation in government jobs and therefore they need reservation.

It is obvious that the BJP and its patron, RSS as well as their numerous affiliates would oppose the Misra report condemning it as minoritism and Muslim appeasement. But the Sangh Parivar's allegation holds no water. In fact, the Misra panel, sensing the prospective opposition, has sought to explain the reasons for adopting this policy of reservation within reservation. The panel feels that although large numbers of Muslims are already included in the OBC list but they are unable to compete with their relatively more prosperous and educationally advanced Hindu counterparts. But more than this argument what would silence the OBC leadership from voicing opposition to the recommendations of the Misra panel is their fear of losing the Muslim vote bank. This is the beauty of democracy that various considerations, pulls and pressures bring about balance in people's thinking and approaches and pave the way for reason to prevail over blind and raw passions.

Another reason for not opposing the 'quota within quota' policy is that it has already been implemented in Kerala, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh. The Centre would surely adopt this Southern example or pattern to counter political as well as judicial challenges if any. The UPA leadership seems to have done its home work well; the result is that no one, barring the BJP, is opposing the Misra panel's report tooth and nail.

The Sangh Parivar's biggest problem is perhaps not the 'quota within quota' for Muslims but the Misra Commission's recommendation to give the reservation benefits to Christian and Muslim Dalits. These are the Dalits who have become Christian or Muslim and thus forfeited their right to caste-based reservation, for there is no caste system in Christianity or in Islam. The Misra panel, while taking note of the theological reality, has advanced the argument that practically caste system operates both among Christians and Muslims. Moreover, conversion from one religion to another one does not necessarily results in economic or educational advancement of the convert. Thus the convert, by remaining backward educationally and economically, should continue to benefit from the reservation policy till he/she becomes forward or advanced on these counts.

Obviously the Sangh Parivar would not be impressed by such arguments. Their spacious argument is that extending the benefits of reservation to Christian and Muslim Dalits would encourage conversion. But why they do not realize that denying them the benefits of reservation on account of their having become Christian or Muslim would amount to state coercion to keep them within the Hindu fold.

*Contd. on page 7*