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Life is Ever Changing

S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Islam is the last message of God Almighty; it has been presented in a complete form before the world, which has been told that:

"This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour unto you, and have chosen for you as religion AL-ISLAM" (Al-Ma'ida:3)

On the one hand God has been well-pleased to favour mankind with a perfect and final religion; on the other, the fact is that life is on the move, ever-changing and evolving as someone has aptly said:

*"Life is ever youthful,
Continuously on the move, zestful."*

The religion bestowed by Omniscient God is grounded in a faith in eternal values and transcendental facts, yet, it is also zestful, perpetually -moving and sufficing for the transformations of life. God has endowed His religion with the capacity to turn over a new leaf with the changes ringing the world and thus provide human beings with an uninterrupted guidance in every phase of their life. It can help humanity to find its way at every turn and pass. It is not a culture of any particular age or the architecture of a particular place preserved in the shape of archaeological remains, but a living faith, a masterpiece of ingenuity and craftsmanship of the omniscient and Wise Creator :

"That is the measuring of the Mighty, the Wise. (Ya Sin : 38)

... the doing of Allah Who perfecteth all things. Lo! He is Informed of what ye do."

(An Namal : 88)

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Wisdom of Qur'an

“They say: ‘If we were to follow this guidance with you, we should be snatched away from our land.’ Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary to which fruits of all kinds are brought as a provision from Us? But most of them do not know.”

(Al Qur'an – 28:57)

This is what the Qurayshite unbelievers used to say as an excuse for not accepting Islam. When we reflect on this, we realise that this was indeed the main reason for their denial. In order to appreciate it fully, we should bear in mind the position of Quraysh in those times, a position which they felt would be undermined if they were to accept Islam. “What initially lent eminence to the Quraysh in Arabia was their descent from Ishmael. When, thanks to the sagacity of Qusayy ibn Kilab, the Quraysh became the custodians of the Ka’bah and settled down in Makkah, their importance grew.” “Here is God’s first answer to the excuse the Quraysh offered. This response amounted to saying: “Is it not because of God’s special favour that it is looked upon with respect and veneration by all, and every year thousands of people come to it as pilgrims? It is thanks to this favour that you have become the leaders of Arabia and the major beneficiaries of the flourishing international trade of your time. Do you think that by rebelling against God Who, in the first place, bestowed this favour on you, you will prosper, and that you will be instantly destroyed if you follow God’s Religion?” ■

Pearls From the Prophet Mohammad (PBUH)

“Abu Hurairah relates that the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be to him) said: “A person who calls people towards doing good deeds will get the same reward as those who follow him and do good; and nothing will be diminished from the requital of the latter. Similarly, those who call the people towards vice will have the same punishment as those who follow him without any diminution in the punishment of the perpetrators.”

(Muslim)

Our deeds are either good or bad as no deed can be both good and evil. And people, in given circumstances, are tempted to do either good or bad deed. This hadith gives good tidings to a person who not only does good deeds but invites others to do so. It also warns a person against inviting his/her fellow beings to vice. Calling people towards doing good deeds is in itself a virtuous act. It wins the pleasure of the Lord Almighty as well as provides an opportunity for the invitee for doing good deeds. Contrary to it, the act of inviting people to commit some evil is in itself a vicious act. It earns the Divine wrath as well as puts the invitee in a position that earns the Divine wrath. “God is All-Powerful. He can give reward and award punishment to whom He wills. He knows perfectly well the deeds done by His servants as well as the intention lurking behind the commission of the deed. Hence His judgement is based on human actions. He however can forgive whomsoever He wills. ■

Editor's Note 

Advent of Ramadan

It is said that underlying significance and aims and virtues of the four fundamental duties of Islam, Namaz, Zakat, Saum (fasting) and Haj should be clearly understood by believers. Each one of these has its own significance and their cumulative observance and practice make a person a perfect Muslim.

Salat or Namaz is ordained to be observed as a regular worship and should be offered five times a day as prescribed in Tradition. Zakat that is the poor's due is obligatory on those who possess wealth more than their own requirements. Similarly Haj that is pilgrimage to Mecca is must for those who are financially and physically sound. The Saum that is fasting is obligatory for a month in a year.

Imam Ghazali shedding light on the objects of fasting, writes :

“The object of fasting is that man should produce within him a semblance of the Divine Attribute of Samadiyat (i. e., Freedom from want), that he should, as far as possible, take after the angels and cast off the beastly propensities because the angels are free from desire and the place of man, too, is above the animals and he has, further, been given the power of discrimination to resist the pressure of inordinate appetites. He is, of course, inferior to angels in the sense that desire often overpowers him and he has to strive hard to subdue it. When he conquers them he attains the dizzy heights of the heavenly host and begins to dwell on the plane of the angels”.

Similarly, Allama Ibn-i-Qaiyyim says:

“The purpose of fasting is that the spirit of man was released from the clutches of desire and moderation prevailed in his carnal self and through it, he realised the goal of purification and everlasting felicity. It is aimed at curtailing the intensity of desire and lust by means of hunger and thirst, at inducing man to realise how many were there in the world like him who had to go even without a small quantity of food, at making it

difficult for the Devil to deceive him, and at restraining his organs from turning towards things in which there was the loss of both the worlds. Fasting thus is the bridle of the God-fearing, the shield of the crusaders and the discipline of the virtuous.”

Proceeding further the Allama remarks:

“Fasting is most efficacious in the protection of the external limbs and internal organs. It guards against disorders resulting from the accumulation of the effete matter. It expels the toxins that are injurious to health and cures the ailments which develop in the body due to over-indulgence. It is beneficial for health and most helpful in leading a life of piety and good-doing.

“Says the Quran :

O ye who believe: Fasting is prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before ye, that ye may ward off evil. (– ii : 183)

“And the holy Prophet has said: Fasting is a shield.”

“Hence, a person who wishes to marry but does not have the means to support a family is advised to observe fasting. It has been prescribed as a sovereign remedy for him, the object being to demonstrate that since the advantages of fasting were evident from the point of view of commonsense God had enjoined it as an act of mercy for the protection of His slaves”.

Considering the importance and virtues of the Ramadan fasting we expect that every Muslim, as in the past, this year too will observe this obligation. ■

S.A.

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Message of The Prophets

- S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi

Now we shall briefly survey the knowledge imparted by the prophets about God, His attributes, His creation, the interrelation between God and Universe, the alpha and omega of the cosmos, its reality, purpose of man's life on earth, in short, the apocalyptic world-view and eschatology; the foundation that these teachings provide for the edifice of civilization and the type of socio-ethical structure raised thereon.

It is to be noted that unlike the maze of differing theories and contradictory postulates put forth by the philosophers and mystics, the message of prophets has always been one and the same; there is no incompatibility or discrepancy in their teachings. It would have been better to quote here from other scriptures too besides Al-Qur'an, but since most of these have either been lost or manipulated, as their historical criticism has already demonstrated, not enough material is to be found on each one of these topics in these scriptures. I would, therefore, present extracts only from Al-Qur'an which is the last of the Divine scriptures and repository of all that was revealed in the previous books.

Universe and its Creator

(i) Attributes of God and His faculties :

"He is Allah, than whom there is

no other God, the knower of the invisible and the visible.

He is the beneficent, the Merciful.

He is Allah, than whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy one, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb.

Glorified be Allah from all that they ascribe as partner (Unto Him).

He is Allah, the Creator, the Shaper out of naught, the Fashioner.

His are the most beautiful names.

All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifieth Him, and He is the Mighty, the Wise."

(Al-Hashr : 22-24)

(ii) Creation of the World and Its management:

"Lo! Your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, then mounted He the Throne.

He covereth the night with the day, which is in haste to follow it, and hath made the sun and the moon and the stars subservient by His command.

His verily is all creation and commandment.

Blessed be Allah, the Lord of Worlds !"
(Al-A'raf: 54)

(iii) The kingdom of God and His Powers:

“Say (unto them, O Muhammad):

Who provideth for you from the sky and the earth, or Who owneth hearing and sight; and Who bringeth forth the living from the dead and bringeth forth the dead from the living; and Who directeth the course? They will say: Allah.

Then say: Will ye not then keep your duty (unto Him)? “ (Yunus: 31)

“Say: Unto Whom (belongeth) the earth and whosoever is therein, if ye have knowledge

They will say : Unto Allah,

Say: Will ye not then remember?

Say: Who is Lord of the seven heavens, and Lord of the Tremendous Throne ?

They will say: Unto Allah (All that belongeth).

Say: will ye not then keep duty (unto Him)?

Say: in Whose hand is the dominion over all things and He protecteth, while against Him there is no protection, if ye have knowledge?

They will say: Unto Allah (all that belongeth).

Say: How thon are ye bewitched”?

(Al-Muminun : 84-89)

“Unto Him belongeth whatsoever

is in the heavens and the earth, and religion is His forever.

Will ye then fear any other than Allah? “

(An-Nahl : 52)

“Seek they other than the religion of Allah, when unto Him submitteth whosoever is in the heavens and the earth, willingly or unwillingly, and unto Him they will be returned.”

(Al-e-Imran: 83)

(iv) The World has not been created in vain nor is it without any purpose or utility:

“And We created not the heaven and the earth and all that is between them in vain.”

(As-Sad: 27)

“Lo! In the creation of the heavens and the earth and (in) the difference of night and day are tokens (of His Sovereignty) for men of understanding.

Such as remember Allah, standing, sitting, and reclining, and consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, (and say):

Our Lord ! Thou createdst not this in vain.

Glory be to Thee!”

(Al-e-Imran: 190-1)

(v) Life of Man is neither aimless nor is he independent:

“Thinketh man that he is to be left aimless?”

(*Al-Qiyāmah* 36)

“Deemed ye then that We had created you for naught, and that ye would not be returned unto Us?”

(*Al-Muminun*: 115)

(vi) The purpose of life and death is the trial of man: “Who hath created life and death that He may try which of you is best in conduct; and He is the Mighty, the Forgiving.”

(*Al-Mulk* : 2)

“Then We appointed you viceroys in the earth after them, that We might see how ye behave.”

(*Yunus*; 14)

(vii) Pleasures of earthly life are but a trial :

LO! We have placed all that is on earth as an ornament thereof that We may try them: which of them is best in conduct.”

(*Al-Kahf*: 7)

(viii) Man is the best of Divine creation :

“Verily We have honoured the Children of Adam. We carry them on the land and the sea, and have made provision of good things for them, and have preferred them above many of those whom We created with a marked preferment.”

(*Bani Israel* : 70)

‘Surely We created man of the best stature.’

(*At-Tin* : 4)

(ix) Man is the vicegerent of God on earth :

‘ And When Thy Lord said unto the angels:

Lo ! I am about to place a viceroy in the earth.”

(*Al-Baqarah*: 30)

(ix) Man is a trustee of whatever has been created by God:

“Believe in Allah and His messenger; and spend of that whereof He hath made you trustees; and such of you as believe and spend (aright), theirs will be a great reward.”

(*Al-Hadid*: 7)

(xi) Everything on earth has been created for man alone:

“He it is who created for you all that is in the earth.”

(*Al-Baqarah* : 29)

(xii) Man has been created to worship God:

“I created the jinn and humankind only that they might worship Me.

I seek no livelihood from them, nor do I ask that they should feed Me.”

(*Adh-Dhanyät* : 56-57)

(xiii) The bounties of God are to be utilised by man: "Say: Who hath forbidden the adornment of Allah which He hath brought forth for His bondsmen, and the good things of His providing?"

Say: Such, on the day of Resurrection, will be only for those who believed during the life of the World."

(Al-A'araf: 32)

(xix) Sin is not proper enjoyment of life but lavishness:

"O Children of Adam at every place of worship, not prodigal.

Lo ! He loveth not the prodigals."

(xv) All human beings belong to the same progeny and honour is for virtuous only:

"O mankind! Lo! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes that ye may know one another.

Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best in conduct.

Lo! Allah is knower, Aware."

(Al-Hujurat:13)

The Life After Death

(i) There is a life after death wherein the conduct of earthly life will be adjudged finally and impartially:

(ii) "Lo! unto Us is their return

And Ours their reckoning

(Al-Gheshiyah 25-26)

"Unto Him is the return of all of you; it is a promise of Allah in truth.

Lo ! He produceth creation, then reproduceth it, that He may reward those who believe and do good works with equity."

"And We set a just balance for the Day of Resurrection so that no soul is wronged in ought.

Though it be of the weight of grain of mustard seed ; We bring it. And We suffice for reckoners." *(Al-Anbiya: 47)*

"And whoso doeth good an atom's weight will see it then, And whoso doeth ill an atom's weight will see it then."

(Az-Zilzal 7-8)

Life in this World is finite while that after death is eternal:

"This life of the world is but a pastime and a game.

Lo ! the Home of the Hereafter—that is life, if they but knew."

(Al-Ankabüt: 64)

(iii) Those who excel in goodness and do not spread corruption on earth shall be rewarded a goodly reward:

"As for the abode of the Hereafter We assign it unto those who seek not oppression in the earth, nor yet corruption.

The sequel is for those who ward off (evil)." *(Al-Qasas :83)■*

Justice And Equity

- S. Sulaiman Nadwi

It is easy to do justice for a man leading a secluded life but the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had to deal with hundreds of tribes who were at daggers drawn with one another. If the decision went in one's favour, the other became hostile. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) always tried to unite the hearts and improve the relationships between various tribes for the sake of Islam. Despite all these obstacles, he always did justice and was never partial in deciding the cases. After the conquest of Makkah, the whole of Arabia showed its allegiance to Islam except Ta'if. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) besieged the people of Ta'if but he could not gain victory over them and had to raise the siege. Sakhr, a chief came to know about it and he himself laid the siege and compelled the citizens to reconcile and informed the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about it. Mughira b. Sh'uba Thaqifi came to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) and said: Sakhr had taken my aunt as captive. He (the Holy Prophet) sent for Sakhr and asked him to send Mughira's aunt back to her house. Then Banu Sulaim came. He said: Sakhr had taken possession of our spring when we were

infidels. Now we are Muslims. Ask Sakhr to give our spring. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) sent for him and said: When a people embrace Islam, they become the owner of their lives and property. So give their spring back to them. Sakhr had to concede. As Sakhr was obeying both these orders of the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) his face underwent a change to think that Sakhr had to suffer defeat in both the affairs and he got no reward for the victory of Ta'if.

Once a woman from the tribe of Makhzum committed a theft. The Quraish were concerned about that woman due to the respect of the tribe to which she belonged and wanted that she should escape punishment. Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) loved Usama b. Zaid dearly. They requested him to intercede on her behalf. He spoke to Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). The colour of the face of Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) changed and he said: This (injustice) destroyed Bani Isra'il before you that when any weak one committed theft they inflicted the prescribed punishment and if any one of (high) rank committed theft among them, they spared him.

When there was peace with the Jews of Khaibar and the land was distributed among the Mujahidin, 'Abdullah bin Sahl went there for division of dates. Muhayyisa, his cousin was also with him. As 'Abdullah passed through a street, somebody killed him and threw his dead body in a ditch. Muhayyisa told the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) about the matter (murder of his cousin). Thereupon he said to them: Are you prepared to take oaths that the Jews have killed him. They said: We have not witnessed this matter ourselves. How can we then take oath? The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: They are non-Muslims. They will exonerate themselves by taking hundred oaths. Although this place was inhabited by the Jews only and it was certain that 'Abdullah bin Sahl had been killed by them; but in the absence of an eye-witness, the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) himself paid the blood-wit and sent to them one hundred camels from Bait-ul-Mal.

Tariq b. Muharibi has reported: In the earlier days of Islam in Arabia some of our men set out from Rabadha for Madinah. We halted at a place near the city. A woman was also along with us. When we were sitting a person who was wearing white clothes came and greeted us. We responded to his greeting. We had a red camel. He

asked the price of the camel. We told him the number of dates (as the price of the camel). He did not bargain with us and accepted the price offered by us and went to the city holding the reins of the camel. When he was out of sight, it occurred to us that we had not received the price and we do not know him. So we began to find fault with each other. Thereupon the pardah-observing woman said: Don't be anxious, I have never seen the face of a person so bright like the full moon (such a person will never deceive). When it was night, a person came and said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) has sent meal and dates for you. Next morning we reached Madinah. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was delivering a sermon in the mosque. Seeing us there an Ansar said: O Allah's Messenger! These people who belong to the tribe of Tha'laba and are their inheritors, had killed a person of our tribe. Let a person of their tribe be killed in revenge thereof. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) said: The revenge of the father (for killing a person) cannot be taken from his son.

Abu Hadrad Aslami (may Allah be pleased with him) was a companion, He was in debt to a Jew. He had nothing save the clothes he was wearing. It was the time when the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was

intending to send an expedition to Khaibar, Abu Hadrud asked the Jew to give him time (to pay off the debt) but he did not agree and brought him to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him). He (the Holy Prophet) asked him to pay off the debt; but he begged to be excused. He (the Holy Prophet) again asked him to pay the debt but he again apologized and said: Allah's Messenger (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) the battle of Khaibar is near at hand. Perchance, he may get something on return from the battle and I will be in a position to pay him back. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) again repeated the same command: Pay him at once. Then he gave his lower garment to the Jew to return the debt and untied his turban and wrapped up his waist with it.

As a result of this just and equitable treatment, not only the Muslims but the Jews who were his sworn enemies brought their cases of disputes to him for decision and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) decided them according to their laws. The Holy Qur'an mentions this incident clearly. Before the advent of Islam, the Jews of Banu Nadir and Banu Quraiza had prescribed different and strange laws for inflicting punishments on these tribes according to their social status and honour. If any

Quraizi killed any person of Banu Nadir the former was ordered death punishment in Qisas (retribution) but if any Quraizi was happened to be killed by a Nadiri he had to pay Qisas equivalent to the dates which a hundred camels could carry. When this case was brought to the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) he decided according to the Torah and prescribed equal Qisas for both the tribes.

The most critical situation in giving a just decision arises when the judge is himself involved in the case. Once the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was distributing the booty and there was a multitude of men around him when a person came and fell on him. The Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) had a stick in his hand. He pushed him with the end of this stick. Perchance, it struck his mouth and he received an injury. He (the Holy Prophet) said: You may take revenge from me. He said: O Messenger of Allah (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) I have forgiven you. When he was at the point of death, he said to the people: If I owe anything to anyone or I have harmed the life, property or honour of anyone he may take revenge in this world from me in so far as my life, property or honour is concerned. Only one person claimed a few dirhams which were paid to him. ■

(Cont. from page 34)

the scriptures, were situated in the Middle East, the Western scholar, Niebuhr, visited Arabia in 1762 and published his findings in 1772. Europe now realised for the first time that Biblical studies would remain incomplete without knowing the historical, cultural and religious areas in ancient Yemen, in Arabia, in Egypt and in Palestine. This was not possible without learning Arabic.

Attempts to locate the names of places and of the tribes mentioned in the Bible had started in the Medieval and the Byzantine period. But the awareness and motivation created in the eighteenth century accelerated the speed of scholarly researches in the nineteenth century. The area of Petra (Jordan) was explored in 1812. Excavation teams explored various areas in 1838, 1865, 1867, 1919 and in 1926-32. The excavations revealed the places referred to or mentioned in the Biblical stories. Expert teams from Harvard, Princeton and Chicago Universities as well as the British, German and American teams continued in exploration. They achieved competence in Arabic through the awareness and realisation of the value of the language and not through mechanical and technical language labs.

The fact was now established that no student of comparative religion could afford to ignore Arabic.

The significance of Arabic was further realised in recent decades. Professor George Sarton of Harvard University who wrote his three volumes on the history of sciences, (which are his monumental works), realised the significance of Arabic when he discovered that modern sciences started with the Arabs. He decided to go to Syria to learn Arabic before completing his works.

Socio-economic and political motivations were again as strong as the religious one. Oriental scholars were convinced that the study of the socio-economic and political conditions of the Middle East was not possible without learning Arabic and without achieving communicative competence in the language. The Petro-dollar economy, the oil-dependency, the trade and commercial and diplomatic links in the area compelled the scholars to motivate Western people to embark on the acquisition of the Arabic language in their own best interests. ■

Lack of Regard For Allah Results Social Imbalance

- S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi*

The world history demonstrates that if there is no fear of God and accountability on the Day of Judgement, the man yields to his desires and looks at every matter of life in mundane perspective. Sometimes it goes to the extent that he does not hesitate to exploit and oppress for its sake. It is threadbare on individual and community level.

The human history is replete with the incidents that the communities lack of God fear took to the shameful and barbarous acts. Every time the glorious Qur'an speaks of such society, it depicts their wrong and cruel ways. Their reluctance to the obedience of the One God has been declared as the main plank of their corruption.

Egyptian pharaohs made their subjects slave labour vehemently in order to raise colossal tombs of their dead kings. On account of these they unleashed cruelty and showcased the signs of their glory. And then they took the noble women of Bani Israel as their maids for the sake of their worldly gains and generally killed their sons so that they might not confront after they are grown ups. The Qur'an relates, "Pharaoh behaved arrogantly in the land, and divided the people into groups, seeking to weaken one section, slaying their sons and sparing their daughters" (Al-Qasas-4). On the other hand Aad, Thamood and Amaliqah

dynasties would demonstrate their pelf and power. Thus the Quran speaks, "Do you build monuments on every high place in vanity, and erect castles hoping that you will live forever. When you lay hands upon anyone, you do so as tyrants."

(Al-Shuara-128, 129, 130)

Probably, the Qur'an mentioned the said communities so that the next generations might understand that in future also the rebels of the One God and the community oblivious to the Hereafter would follow the same footprints. It is high time for people to ponder over it and abstain their self from limitless desires and take the straight path shown by Allah otherwise they would face the torment of Allah. Apart from the communities the instances of such behaviour among individuals have been presented in the Qur'an. Most of them belonged to Bani Israel. When they fell prey to their desires and injustice they faced the wrath of Almighty. These anecdotes are not mere historical facts rather to take the lesson and give the right orientation to their lives. That orientation is directly attached to the pleasure of Allah and belief in the Day of Judgement.

It has clearly been described in the Qur'an that when vices are rampant in human society, the whole society faces Allah's wrath and anger. Sometimes it manifests in the form of complete destruction of the society. But it is said that the man generally is indifferent to these

* Rector, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow.

facts under intoxication of power and authority. Consequently, he has to face bad outcome.

A series of stories have been narrated in the Qur'an. The purpose is nothing but to warn the believers of One God. Some of them are about atrocities made over the subjects by the ruling community. In some cases they exploit and suppress the masses. A few of them are related to the rich to maintain their status at the cost of innocent lives. In some other cases their deceitful indulgences have been discussed. Those communities have also been addressed who were indulged in the said crimes and Allah's messengers tried their best to mend their ways and warned them of dire consequences but they did not budge from their lifestyle. Finally, such calamity descended on them that swallowed the whole community. Sometimes through earthquakes, cyclones or by heavenly and earthly disasters they were punished. All this was due to their haughtiness, misuse of power, cruelty and indifference towards the commandments of Allah.

Undoubtedly, all the aforementioned vices are present in the contemporary world and day by day on the rise. The tactics to check and abstain them is not at all. Human society has fallen to its lowest ebb. All sorts of vices are there in today's world whether they are horse trading in terms of politics, towering buildings, exploitation of the poor to amass wealth, misuse of power or deceitfulness and cleverness in business and atrocities on the basis of religion and caste. Despite

claims and sloganeering for democracy and equality even today the condition of the poor and marginalised sections of society remains the same. In some cases cruelty and barbarism has crossed all limits. The incidents of atrocities against Siberians in exile, minorities of Southern Europe and unjust attitude towards Palestinians are glaring instances. The examples of distinction on the basis of blacks and whites are still there in minds. These incidents are of community level. On the other hand selfishness, high-handedness and sinful activities can be seen everywhere on individual level. Over and above lack of Allah's fear and accountability on the Day of Judgement aggravates the situation. In such condition outburst of Allah's anger is not a strange thing. In this regard even Muslims should be cautious as they are indulged in plethora of them. It is alarming for us. Allah dislikes oppression, cruelty and disobedience to His commandments. But it is His law that He does not punish at once but rather He gives chance to mend ways. Ultimately if they persist clinging to the sinful activities, chastisement and dire consequences are waiting for them.

Now, it is duty of ulama that they should instill the fear of Allah, remembrance of the Hereafter and draw attention to reform the circumstances. Community leaders should also strive to bring about a change in society so that an exemplary society may come up and the people may live with peace and serenity.■

*(English Rendering:
Mohammad Shakir Nadwi)*

How To Save The Nation

- S. Bilal Abdul Hai Hasani Nadwi*

Today, fascist forces gained momentum and often raise their ugly heads to destroy India's composite culture and civilization. Even they are prone to sacrifice country's assets and wealths for their own benefits and interests. It is indeed a matter of great concern. If they steer the country on the same direction, they will pose a great threat to its unity, stability and security. The long history of the country shows that India has always been a bouquet of flowers from time immemorial where people belonging to different religions, castes, speaking different languages, having different cultures, different modes of living, different clothing, different food habits, live together in harmony. Love and fondness has always been its main features. Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti Ajmeri like celebrity was born here. He was an embodiment of morality, probity, honesty and integrity. Even today his name is held in high esteem in and out of the country. Countless anecdotes of tolerance and forbearance of Muslim rulers are also preserved in the books of history.

Unfortunately, a deliberate conspiracy is being hatched to obliterate real and genuine history of the country. Besides, such myths and baseless anecdotes are being incorporated in the syllabi which will definitely create gulf. The need of the hour is to cement the prevailing fissure and cleft from which mutual love, sympathy and

commiseration may come up among various religions and communities.

It should be the main characteristic of any country that the people of that country must live with peace and serenity and make use of their power and caliber in constructive work which strengthen the country otherwise civil wars will undermine it from within and then controlling over it will be a herculean task. It is up to us to come forward and work in unison for the development of the country. Only then we may lead a peaceful life here.

Needles to add that freedom of religion is our constitutional right. Applying superiority of law is the main essence for any country's prosperity, progress, protection and security. Because of lawlessness anarchy and mobocracy will breed which no one can stop easily. It is time when every person and party should ponder over it cool-mindedly.

For the sake of own benefit harming the country in any way is akin to harming himself. We all are boarding in the same boat. If anyone makes a hole to it and hurts it, the existence of all will be on peril. One may suffer trouble but not give any spot and bolt on the image of the country. Former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee when came to Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow to meet ailing S. Abul Hasan Ali Nadw, Maulana told him "Vajpayeeji please take care of the country. The country is being weakened and its main spirit is also being damaged."

Today, at the time of elections every

* *Nazir-e-Aam, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow*

candidate tries to get his party succeeded. And to achieve it he adopts such illegal resources which sometimes prove cancer for the country. If this mode of selfishness remains, we will have to incur its retribution one day or the other.

Accordingly, everybody will have to think above his personality and party level

and interest of the country must be the top priority. If the country flourishes, everything will stay intact. Every citizen of the country possesses energy and potential. If anyone strives to enfeeble his fellow member, as if he tries to debilitate his country itself. ■

(English Rendering: O.R. Nadwi)

National Anthem Recital Now Must in Madrassas

LUCKNOW: Madrassa students across UP will now have to recite the national anthem as a mandatory activity along with morning prayers before they begin their classes, according to a decision of the UP Board of Madrasa Education on Thursday. The decision comes almost five years after the board in 2017 had made the recital of national anthem and hoisting of the national flag mandatory on Independence Day.

Several decisions related to examinations, attendance and recruitment of teachers were taken by the board at a meeting headed by chairperson Iftikhar Ahmad Javed on Thursday. It was decided that a Teachers' Eligibility Test (TET) based Madrasa Teachers Eligibility Test (MTET) should be started as a pre-qualification to become madrasa teacher.

"Bhai-Bhateejawaad has become order of the day in teachers' recruitment. This is why the board has decided to make MTET mandatory, but the selection process will be finalised by the management. A formal proposal will be sent to the government soon," the board chairperson told TOI.

"The national anthem is sung in various schools and we want to instill patriotism in madrasa students too so that they know our history and culture apart from religious studies. It is already recited in some madrassas. We have made it compulsory now from the coming academic session," he added.

Besides, the board will conduct a survey to figure out how many children of madrasa teachers study in private schools to boost declining student numbers, he said, adding that student attendance and verification would also be linked with Aadhar.

"The teacher-student ratio in several madrassas is skewed and we plan to rotate teachers for better results. We also want to find out where children of our teachers study to boost numbers as it is said that our teachers motivate others to send their children to madrassas, but they send their own wards to convent schools," Javed added.

To work on the student number, Aadhar card will be linked to student registration for verification and attendance purposes too, while biometric attendance will be put in place for teachers from the next academic session.

Stating that madrasa board exams would be held from May 14 to May 27, he said that as decided at a meeting in October last year subjects like Hindi, English, maths, social sciences and science would be made mandatory from the next academic session for students up to senior secondary level.

"Six examination papers will be made mandatory with the addition of these subjects. These subjects were optional until now and taught from NCERT books. We want our students to be part of the mainstream," Javed added. ■

(The Times of India 25-03-2022)

Islam And Science

- Mohammad Aslam Siddiqui*

From the 8th through the 13th century CE, the scholarly disciplines of the Arabic-Islamic world underwent significant development, ushering in discovery and knowledge that would later influence medical practice, science, and education throughout the world. This period was known as the Golden Age of Arabic-Islamic Science. Advancements were made in nearly all scholarly disciplines, from astronomy, medicine and mathematics, to physics, chemistry, engineering and philosophy.

Following the death of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 632 CE, Islamicate power expanded rapidly. However, what started as a single, vast Arab state soon fractured into two spheres of political influence, a western sphere centered in southern Spain and an eastern one centered in the new capital of Baghdad. The eastern sphere, under the Abbasid Caliphate, was a crossroads for Persian, Indian and Byzantine cultures and languages and a place where Islam, Judaism and Christianity dwelled side by side. The city was a melting pot of belief systems and cultures that allowed noblemen and domestic scholars to discover other

empires' scientific advancements, to trade houses of thought, and to receive foreign scholarly works to study. (The Muslim World League Journal)

No doubt, Islamic world had a very significant impact in the field of science and technology. In the words of Maulana S.M. Rabey Hasani Nadwi, Rector Nadwatul Ulama and President All India Muslim Personal Law Board, "When Europe was passing through darkness and ignorance of Middle Ages, Muslim world was producing scholars, thinkers, educationists and eminent masters of physical and social sciences. European writers have quite often acknowledged that for six hundred years Europe learnt and benefitted from the researches of Muslims before commencing their march to progress."

The brief accounts of some prominent Muslim scientists are given below:

**Muhammad ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi
(780 - 850)**

Father of Algebra

Muhammad ibn Musa Al-Khwarizmi was a Persian polymath. He was also known as Algoritmi or Algaurizin. He considerably influenced mathematics, astronomy, and

* *Director of Finance, Nadwatul Ulama, Lucknow and Former Principal Amiruddaula Islamia Degree College, Lucknow.*

geography. AlKhwarizmi was the head of the famous library House of Wisdom in Baghdad. He introduced the word algebra (al-jabr), which originated from the title of his book, and his name was adapted to construct the term “algorithm.” His works introduced Hindu-Arabic numerals and the concepts of algebra into European mathematics. For his achievements in this field, he is known as the Father of Algebra.

Jabir Ibn Haiyan

(722 -c. 804-816)

Father of Chemistry

Ibn Haiyan explored chemistry, cosmology, astronomy and astrology, medicine, pharmacology, zoology, botany, metaphysics, logic and grammar. His numerous works in these fields are called the Jabirian Corpus. They contain the oldest known systematic classification of chemical substances and instructions for deriving an inorganic compound from organic substances. Ibn Haiyan is also the author of the earliest known versions of the sulfur-mercury theory of metals, the theory that all metals contain some amount of Sulphur and Mercury. This mineralogical theory was dominant in chemistry and metallurgy until the 18th century.

Abu Nasr Al-Farabi

(872 - 950)

The Second Teacher

Al-Farabi also called “the Second Teacher,” is widely known as one of the most outstanding Muslim scholars of all time. He spent his life in Baghdad, but biographers disagree on his origin. Some say he was Persian, while others point to his Turkish background. This early Islamic philosopher was also a scientist, cosmologist, mathematician, and music theorist. Al-Farabi wrote a treatise, On Vacuum, expressing his thoughts about the nature of the existence of void. He also performed the first experiments on the presence of vacuum, in which he investigated handheld plungers in water. The Second Teacher also created a theory of emanation to explain the chronology of the universe. Emanationism is the cosmological theory that all things flow from an underlying principle or reality rather than being created from nothing.

Ibn Zuhr

(1094 - 1162)

Pioneer of Surgery

This Arab physician, surgeon and poet, also known by the Latinized name Avenzoar, was born in Seville and distinguished himself as the most highly regarded physician of his time. He was particularly famous for his rational and empirical approach to medicine. His major work, Book of Simplification Concerning Therapeutics and Diet, was

translated into Latin and Hebrew and significantly influenced the development and progress of surgery. He also influenced medical knowledge by identifying several diseases and finding their treatments, including bezoar stones, clumps of partially digested or undigested materials found in the gastrointestinal tract. Additionally, Ibn Zuhr performed the first experimental tracheotomy.

Ibn Khaldun

(1332-1406)

Founder of Social Sciences

Ibn Khaldun was a sociologist, philosopher, historian and the founder of disciplines that would eventually evolve into social sciences such as sociology, economics and demography. Famous European scholars such as Niccolö Machiavelli and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel recognized Ibn Khaldun as one of the greatest philosophers of the Middle Ages. His best-known work, the Muqaddimah, influenced 17th-century Ottoman historians including Katip Celebi, Ahmed Cevdet Pasha and Mustafa Naima. They used its theories to analyze the growth and decline of the Ottoman Empire.

Frederick Akbar Mahomed

(1849-1884)

Forerunner in Blood Pressure

Mahomed was an internationally

known British Muslim physician, As an outstanding student, he won the student Pupils' Physical Society prize for his work on the sphygmograph, a device to measure blood pressure. His work helped improve the tool so that it could measure arterial blood pressure in Bright's disease, pregnancy, scarlet fever, gout, alcohol, and lead poisoning. In 1875, he gained a doctorate from the University of Brussels. In 1880, Mahomed advocated undertaking the comprehensive systematic documentation of disease in Britain. He also explored factors predisposing to diseases. Additionally, Mahomed contributed to many other advancements in the medical field, such as blood transfusion and appendectomy.

Mohammad Abdus Salam

(1926-1996)

Scientific Father from Pakistan

Salam was a world-renowned physicist and the only Pakistani scientist awarded the Nobel Prize Salam served as a scientific advisor to the Ministry of Science and Technology in Pakistan and played a significant role in developing science in the country. He was the founding director of the Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission and established the Theoretical Physics Group. For these contributions, he earned the nickname "Scientific Father." In 1979, Salam was

awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in recognition of his work on the electroweak theory, an important discovery in particle physics. Salam is other outstanding achievements include the Pati—Salam model, magnetic photon, vector meson, Grand Unified Theory, and work on supersymmetry.

Ahmed Zewail

(1946-2016)

Father of Femtochemistry

Ahmed Hassan Zewail was an Egyptian-American chemist. Zewail was the Linus Pauling Chair Professor of Chemistry, Professor of Physics, and director of the Physical Biology Center for Ultrafast Science and Technology at the California Institute of Technology. He is known as the “father of femtochemistry,” the field exploring chemical reactions across femtoseconds. For his work, Zewail was awarded the 1999 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, becoming the first Egyptian and second Muslim awarded a Nobel Prize in science, and the second African to win a Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

Aziz Sancar

(b. 1946)

First Turkish Muslim Nobel Prize Recipient

Sancar is a Turkish molecular biologist who specializes in DNA repair, cell cycle checkpoints and the circadian

clock. He is the Sarah Graham Kenan Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine and a member of the UNC Lineberger Comprehensive Cancer Center. In 2015, he was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry for mechanistic studies of DNA repair and became the first Turkish chemist, the second Turk and the third Muslim scientist awarded the Nobel Prize. His other groundbreaking achievements include work on photolyase and nucleotide excision repair in bacteria.

Sheikh Muszaphar Shukor

(b. 1972)

The First Malaysian Astronaut

Shukor is a Malaysian orthopedic surgeon and the first Malaysian astronaut. He launched to the International Space Station aboard Soyuz TMA-11 with the Expedition 16 crew in October 2007 under an agreement with Russia. During the spaceflight, Shukor carried out experiments related to the characteristics and growth of liver cancer and leukemia cells and the crystallization of various proteins and microbes in space. His discoveries influenced general science and medical research, as well as local industries. *(The Muslim World League Journal)* ■

(To be continued)

Introduction To Ramadhan

- Aelfwine Mischler

Fasting the lunar month of Ramadhan is such an important Pillar of Islam that Muslims believe that if one dies without having made up the missed fasts, the guardian (or heir) must make them up, for they are a debt owed to Allah The Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) said, "Whoever observes fasts during the month of Ramadan out of sincere faith and hoping to attain Allah's rewards, then all his past sins will be forgiven." (reported by Al-Bukhari)

Muslims believe that the influence of the devils on the believers who obey Allah is diminished. Muhammad Said, "When the month of Ramadan starts, the gates of the heaven are opened and the gates of Hell are closed and the devils are chained." (reported by Al-Bukhari)

Month of the Qur'an

Muslims believe that the first verses of the Qur'an (Surah Al-Alaq 96:1-5) were revealed in the month of Ramadhan while Muhammad was in spiritual retreat in the cave of Hira outside of Makkah. Years later when the fast of Ramadan was made compulsory, the Angel Jibreel used to sit with Muhammad every day during Ramadan so that the latter could recite all that had been revealed so far of the Qur'an. In his final year, the Prophet recited the entire Qur'an twice in Ramadhan.

Muslims continue the tradition of

reading the entire Qur'an at least once during Ramadan. In Muslim countries, it is not at all unusual in this month to see many people reading the Qur'an while riding the bus or metro to and from work. Others find time early in the morning, late at night, or at intervals throughout the day.

Many others read or recite the Qur'an during Tarawih Prayers, which are held only during Ramadan, or in private late night Prayers called Tahajjud.

Muslims who cannot yet read Arabic well, spend some time each day listening to a tape or CD of the Qur'an being recited. Muslims consider Ramadhan to be a good time to get into the habit of reading at least some of the Qur'an or its translation every day, and if they haven't read either of them cover to cover. Ramadan is the time to do it.

Other Acts of worship

In addition to reading the Qur'an, Muslims try to spend more time in dhikr (remembrance of Allah) during this month and make an effort to perform Tarawih Prayer, preferably in congregation. Muslims also sometimes perform the late night Prayer called Tahajjud. They may do this before or after eating the pre-drawn meal, just before the Fajr (Dawn) Prayer.

Ramadan is also a favourite time for 'Umrah - a visit to the Ka'bah in Makkah. When performed in Ramadan, 'Umrah

takes the same reward as Hajj (but it does not replace the obligatory Hajj).

How Muslims Fast

According to Muslims, fasting means abstaining not only from food and drink, but also from sexual intercourse, lying, arguing, and back-biting. While fasting, Muslims must be careful to restrain their tongues, temper, and even their gaze. Ramadan is the time for Muslims to learn to control themselves and to develop their spiritual side.

Basically, Muslims try to have a pre-dawn meal, known as sahur, before they begin fasting. The fast lasts from dawn to sunset. As soon as the sun has set, Muslims break their fast without delay. Generally, Muslims may break their fast with a small amount of food — the sunnah is to do so with an odd number of dates and then perform the Maghrib (Sunset) Prayer before eating a full meal.

For more information on the rules of fasting, including who is exempted, see *The Meaning and Rules of Fasting*.

Charity in Ramadhan

Ramadan is also the month of charity. Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, “. . .Whoever draws nearer (to Allah) by performing any of the (optional) good deeds in (this month), shall receive the same reward as performing an obligatory deed at any other time; and whoever performs an obligatory deed in (this month), shall receive the reward of performing seventy obligations at any other

time. It is the month of patience, and the reward of patience is Paradise. It is the month of charity, and a month in which a believer’s sustenance is increased. Whoever gives food to a fasting person to break his fast shall have his sins forgiven, and he will be saved from the Hell-Fire, and he shall have the same reward as the fasting person, without his reward being diminished at all.” (Reported by Ibn Khuzaymah)

Ibn ‘Abbas, one of Muhammad’s Companions, narrated: “The Prophet was the most generous amongst the people, and he used to be more so in the month of Ramadan when Jibreel visited him, and Jibreel used to meet him on every night of Ramadan till the end of the month. The Prophet used to recite the Holy Qur’an to Jibreel, and when Jibreel met him, he used to be more generous than a fast wind (which causes rain and welfare).” (Reported by Al-Bukhari)

Thus Muslims should try to give generously in Ramadan, both sadaqah (optional charity) and zakat al-mal (obligatory charity). Sadaqah does not only have to be money. It can also be a good deed—such as helping another person—done for the sake of Allah and without expecting any reward from the person. Most Muslims pay their zakah during Ramadan because the reward is so much greater in that month.

It is obligatory for every Muslim to pay a small amount of zakat al-fitr before the end of Ramadan. This money

collected and given to the poorest of the poor so that they may also enjoy the festivities on 'Eid Al-Fitr.

And because of the great reward for feeding a fasting person, in many places iftar (the break-fast meal at sunset) is served in mosques, with the food donated or brought by individuals to share pot-luck style. In some Muslim countries, tables are set up on the sidewalks or outside of mosques to serve iftar to the poor and others. Such traditions also build a sense of brotherhood and community.

Families and friends also like to share iftar. However, sometimes this generosity is exaggerated so that Ramadan becomes a month of lavish tables and overeating.

This goes against the spirit of Ramadan and should be avoided. (See also: Distinguishing Culture from Religion in Ramadan)

The Last Third

Muslims also believe that the last ten days of Ramadan are the holiest of all, and try to make even greater efforts at that time to increase their worship. The holiest night of all, Laylat Al-Qadr, falls on one of the odd numbered nights of the last ten days.

Eid Al-Fitr

The public celebration at the end of Ramadan, on the first day of the month of Shawwal, is called 'Eid Al-Fitr. After sunset on the 29th of Ramadan, Muslims wait for the announcement of whether the new

moon has been sighted, which means that Ramadan is finished and the next day is 'Eid. In that case, there are no Tarawih Prayers that night. If the moon has not been sighted, then there is one more day of fasting and the Tarawih Prayers are performed.

The 'Eid is celebrated with public Prayers and a sermon, often followed by some form of halal (lawful) celebration such as games for the children or sweets shared by everyone. It is a happy day for all. Although Eid Al-Fitr lasts only one day, in Muslim countries, schools, offices, and shops are often closed for two or three days.

It's Not Over Till It's Over

If any of the days of fasting were missed, they must be made up before the next Ramadan. Muslims generally should try to make them up as soon as possible because any days that are missed are considered as a debt to Allah. Muslims believe that if someone dies without having made up the fasts, the guardian or heir should fast the remaining days.

For Muslims, it is a sunnah to fast six days during the month of Shawwal, the lunar month immediately following Ramadan. Muslims believe that if a Muslim fasts all of Ramadan and then fasts any six days in Shawwal, the reward will be as if he or she has fasted the whole year. Many Muslims do take advantage of this mercy from Allah. ■

Prophet's Sermon on Ramazan

Baihaqi reported on the authority of Salman Al-Farsi © that Prophet (PBUH) delivered a sermon on the last day of the month of Sha'ban and said:

"O people! The month of Allah (Ramadhan) has come with its mercies, blessings and forgiveness. The days of this month are the best among the days and the nights are the best among the nights and the hours during Ramadhan are the best among the hours. This is a month in which you have been invited by Him (to fast and pray). Allah has honoured you in it. In every breath you take is a reward of Allah, your sleep is worship, your good deeds are accepted and your invocations are answered.

"Therefore, you most invoke your Lord in all earnestness with heart free from sin, evil, and pray that Allah may help you to keep fast, and to recite the Holy Qur'an. Indeed! Miserable is the one who is deprived of Allah's forgiveness in this great month. While fasting remember the hunger and thirst on the Day of Judgment. Give alms to the poor and needy. Pay respect to your elders, have sympathy for your youngsters and be in towards your relatives and kinsmen. Guard your tongue against unworthy words, and your eyes from scenes that are not worth seeing forbidden and your ears from sounds that should not be heard.

"Be kind to orphans so that if your children may become orphans they will also be treated with kindness. Do repent to Allah for your sins and supplicate with raised hands at the times of prayer as these are the best times, during which Allah Almighty looks at His servants with mercy. Allah answers if they supplicate, responds if they call, grants if He is asked and accepts if they entreat, a people! You have made your conscience the slave of your desires.

"Make it free by invoking Allah for forgiveness. Your back may break from the heavy load of your sins, so prostrate yourself before Allah for long intervals, and make this load lighter. Understand fully that Allah has promised in His Honour and Majesty that, people who perform salat and sajda (prostration) will be guarded from Hell-fire on the Day of Judgment.

"O people! If anyone amongst for *iftar* (meal at sunset) for any believer, Allah will reward him as if he had freed a slave, and Allah will forgive him his sins. A Companion asked: 'but not all of us have the means to do so' The Prophet (PBUH) replied: 'Keep yourself away from Hell-fire though it may consist of half a date or even some water if you have nothing else.'

"O people! Anyone who during this month cultivates good manners will walk over the Sirat (bridge) to Paradise on the day when feet will tend to slip. For anyone who during this month eases the workload of his servants, Allah will make easy his accounting, and for anyone who doesn't hurt others during this month, Allah will safeguard him from His Wrath on the Day of Judgment. Anyone who respects and treats an orphan with kindness during this month, Allah shall look at him with kindness on that Day. Anyone who treats these kinsmen well during this month, Allah will bestow Him on that Day, while anyone who mistreats his kinsmen during this month, Allah will keep away from His Mercy.

"Whoever offers the recommended prayers during this month, Allah will save him from Hell, and whoever observes his obligation during this month, his reward will be seventy times the reward during other months. Whoever repeatedly invokes Allah's blessings on me, Allah will keep his scale of good deeds heavy while the scales of others will be tending to lightness. Whoever recites during this month an ayat (verse) of the Holy Qur'an in other months.

"O people! The gates of Paradise remain open during this month. Pray to your Lord that they may not be closed for you. While the gates of Hell are closed, pray to your Lord that they never open for you. Satan has been chained, invoke your Lord not to let him dominate you." ■

(The Muslim World League Journal)

The Philosophy of Acquiring Communicative Competence in Foreign Languages

- S. Habibul Haq Nadwi

Language and Literature as media of self-expression and affirmation of identity

It is in language and literature that the intellectual, spiritual, cultural and religious energies of an age are discharged. Language and literature are epics of the human soul. They are the ordered versions of life. Since the content of language and literature is the content of life they grow out of life and are nourished and nurtured by life. The close relationship between a language and its people and their culture demands that the language and literature should be studied with seriousness and not merely as an aesthetic past-time.

If we desire to discern the cultural properties of a language as an instrument of national and international understanding, we have to learn, teach and understand a language from the human and philosophical point of view and not from a purely empirical point of view. Inter-cultural awareness is not possible without being a multilingual citizen. In this age of ever-rising multi-lingualism and internationalism one cannot afford to remain mono-lingual. A citizen who knows more than two or three languages is assumed to be more

useful to both the state and to the national culture, and has a better chance of entry to the international scene than others, Linguistic proficiency and communicative competence (making oneself understood in speech, writing and conversation), either in foreign language or in a second language (in a multi-lingual state where many languages and dialects are spoken), confers prestige both on the individual and on the country he lives in.

Language barriers separate nations more than political barriers do. We do not live today in a bi-lingual or multi-lingual age but in an inter-lingual communicational age, when the discipline of languages is being treated as an expression of Truth. Studies are also being conducted in the mechanism of bio-linguistics, psycho-linguistics, ethno-linguistics and semantics. Moreover, symbolic logic and mathematics are being applied to the linguistic problems. But these empirical endeavours signally lack and neglect the human and philosophical approach to the language — learning and teaching. Since multi-lingual countries cannot thrive well without inter-cultural awareness (for the understanding of other racial and ethnic groups living in the same country, but speaking different

languages and dialects), they have to develop a human and philosophical approach towards the learning and teaching of the and second or the foreign language along with the use of empirical and technical aids available to man in the contemporary world.

The place of language study in international education has been realised and confirmed. This realisation is true today as never before. Internationalism has become the spirit of the age. "If you are not an international figure, you are nobody" - has become a popular phrase. This is true. Moreover, the whole world is heavily present through Radio, T.V. and Press at the breakfast tables every morning in every house. The individuals have been planning to go abroad for summer vacations. "Where do we go?" is the major question. To Mexico or to the Middle East? To Japan or to China? TO Europe or to America?

Can an individual enjoy a tour of the frontier less world today without knowing at least the major languages of the world, recognised by the United Nations? He cannot even enjoy an inland tour without knowing local languages. A happy balance between nationalism and internationalism is to be maintained.

It is true that the spirit of nationalism often demands exclusive loyalty to a given cultural pattern and the increasingly vocational emphasis of the

school curricula binds the students to the prestige channel of his own culture, ignoring the inter-cultural understanding. This kind of nationalism is rising because of the loss of faith in the ideal of the so-called internationalism, which, through its organisations and political and diplomatic means in various countries, has been fostering new nationalism and separatism every now and then. The future of the peaceful world can be entrusted only to those who transcend the national and ethno-centric limitations. A balance between the two extremes has to be maintained and the spirit of nationalism and internationalism is to be fostered amongst our children for the sake of world peace. The best time to sow the seeds of international awareness is in late adolescence when the student attains a reasonable degree of stability in his own culture and has a longing for intellectual exploration in the national scene.

The role of language and literature in the national and inter-national reconstruction and in mutual understanding has universally been acknowledged. UNESCO has realised this Truth. Besides the Arab influence, the European Renaissance was inspired by the study of languages. Devoted and motivated humanists and scholars in Europe explored the Greek and Latin classics and invited their fellow men to acquire knowledge in the

languages and literature of the above-mentioned sources of European culture. Men followed the instructions faithfully and, consequently, the intellectual awakening dawned on the horizons of England, Germany and France, both in the seventeenth and in the eighteenth centuries, through the study of Greek and Latin languages and literature. Poets, thinkers and philosophers achieved communicative competence without having used the audio-visual or modern technical assistance in the language labs. They were motivated by the human and the philosophical spirit to the classical heritage. They employed the languages and literature as media of self-expression and as affirmation of national identities.

Philosophical and Human Approach to the Teaching and Learning of a Language

Communicative competence in a foreign or in a second language (in a multi-lingual country) cannot be achieved without a human and philosophical approach to the target language and its people. The electronic eyes in a language lab cannot help the learner in the acquisition of a second language, if the eyes of his psyche (soul) are shut to the aesthetics of the target language. If a teacher or a learner looks down upon a language and its people or its culture, he cannot acquire the language, let alone achieving

competence! The first questions which confront the learners or the teachers are - Learning for what purpose? or Teaching for what purpose?

It is here that a human and philosophical approach is required. It inculcates a spirit of reverence, respect and imaginative sympathy towards the target language. This can be achieved through motivation and not through machines. The learner should be exposed first to the human, cultural and philosophical values of the target language and then to its alphabet. This can facilitate the learning process without much linguistic effort. The motivation may vary in dimensions. They may be religious, spiritual, cultural, political and economic in nature.

Since language is human communication and co-operation and an integral part of culture, its attributes are social unity and cultural cohesion. It reflects moral and social values. The competence in a language, therefore, means competence in the transmission of the same values. Experience shows that both Arabic and European languages were diffused to the non-Arab and non-European lands through strong religious, economic, cultural and political motivations. People first became aware of the value of the language and then were involved in its acquisition with competence.

Communicative Competence in

Arabic Language; The Philosophical and Human Approach

Reading of the Holy Book (i.e. the Qur'an) and writing its commentaries led the Arab humanists and philologists to formulate linguistic rules both at the Basra and the Kufa schools, The Phonetic studies in early Islam made a great impact on the promotion of grammar, which influenced almost all the languages of the Muslim world. Arabic linguistic traditions passed through various stages of development such as (i) the orthographic stage (ii) the grammatical stage (iii) the liturgical stage and (iv) the physiological stage. The set 'signs' for recording the sounds of the language were discussed and evolved under the first stage while the second stage helped the grammarians to develop the speech-sound as a part of the descriptive analysis of the Arabic language. The third stage, that is the proper cantillation of the scripture (i.e. the Qur'an), led humanists to the elaborate studies of linguistic phenomena. It was in the fourth stage that the scientists stepped in and described the anatomy of the human body, the speech organs, whereby the sounds of the language were produced. Now the epigraphists, grammarians and theologians had to listen to the new discoveries in Arabic phonetics. Such a medieval treatise based on physiological analysis was written by Ibn Sina (d. 438 A.H./ 1037 A.D.), which has

been translated into English by K.I. Semaan. A novel approach has been made to the phonetic research. It deals with the structure of human speech (vibratory approach). He says about the sound system:

“.... in my opinion, the immediate cause of sound is the wavelike motion of the air”

The translator of the treatise (Risala fi-Asbab Huduth al-Huruf) remarks:

“The purely scientific way in which Ibn-Sina approaches his subject deserves the utmost credit and places its author among the first linguistic scientists of all times He formulates his work very much the same way as a twentieth century scholar would formulate his investigation of a subject.”

The Basra and the Kufa schools which aimed at achieving communicative competence in Arabic without any interference in language acquisition produced illustrious scholars like al-Khalil b. Ahmad, the author of Kitab al 'Ain, Sibawaih, the author of al-Kitab al-Mubarrad, the author of Kamil, az-Zamakhshari, the author of Mufassal, and others. These medieval Arabic writers on linguistic sciences have every right to recognition and to occupy their place in the history of this discipline and in the phonetic studies in early Islam. Their contributions have always been denied by the

Orientalists.

The Book of Sibawaih is still considered as the standard primary work for all grammarians. The intention of the author was to provide principles and rules of the Arabic language to both foreigners and Muslims, who learnt it as a second language and wanted to achieve communicative competence in speech and in writing. The author treats the subject scientifically. He divides letters into parts, and deals with the articulation of basic letters and explains the points of articulation, its modality and degree of aperture. He has categorized them in details such as lateral, nasal, trill and velarized phonemes. These studies enabled the Arab humanists to achieve communicative competence without any technical or audio-visual assistance which is now accessible to any student or teacher of a language.

The following are nine theories developed during the last six decades in the same strain:

(i) Saussurean School, founded by Ferdinand de Saussure in 1916, puts forward the theory of "Semiology" by which is meant the science and study of signs in general, of which linguistics is only one subdivision.

(ii) Copenhagen School, under the guidance of Louis Hjelmslev, advances the hypothesis of "Glossematics", that is to say, content analysis must be independent of extra-linguistic

existential criteria and expression analysis (phonology) must be independent of (assumed extra-linguistic) phonetic criteria.

(iii) Bloomfieldian School, founded by Leonard Bloomfield in the 1930s, insists on the mechanistic approach to language study, concentrating on methodology and on formal analysis. His statement of all meanings is strictly mechanistic and consequently his attitude towards semantics is rather pessimistic.

(iv) Structuralist School is the school of linguistics which developed primarily under the leadership of Leonard Bloomfield from the 1930s onwards. These linguists concentrated principally on observable and verifiable data in language analysis.

(v) Tagmemic Approach is an approach to Grammar which attempts to combine form and function in basic grammatical units called tag memes. It also analyses units larger than the sentence. The theory of tagmeme was also put forward first by Leonard Bloomfield who defined tagmeme as the smallest meaningful unit of grammatical form.

(vi) The Prague School was constituted by a group of Czech and other scholars doctrinally centred round Prince Nikolai Trubetzkoy who applied Saussurean theory to the elaboration of the phoneme concept. Speech sounds belonged to parole, the phonemic belonged to

language. In studying languages as systems of internally related elements, Prague scholars did not treat the phoneme as a mere class of sounds or as a transcriptional device, but as a complex phonological unit realised by the sounds of speech.

(vii) London School came into being under the guidance of J.R. Firth in 1948. Firth lays down that prosodic phonology is the most important aspect of linguistic analysis. Linguistic form was envisaged by him as sets of abstractions at the lexical, grammatical and phonological levels, referable to actual features and occurrence of phonic data serving as their serving exponents.

(viii) Stratificational School, whose father is Sydney M. Lamb, takes full cognizance of thought patterns and it views language as a series of layers, or stratal system, all closely related. For example, the phonological strata comprise not only phonemic but also hypophonemic layer lie the physical characteristics of sound and the organ functions which go into the production of phonemes. At the upper strata, which include the semantic layer, are sememics and hypersememics; the hypersememic layers comprise experiential elements - entity, event, process and other features of meaning. Between these sets of strata lie the morphemic layers which includes the syntactic layer. The term "experiential"

suggests a memory bank like an electronic computer's.

(ix) Transformational School, the foundations of which were laid by Noam Chomsky in 1957, postulates that grammar generates sentences, assigns structural descriptions and relates their deep structures and meanings to the surface structures and sounds. It makes extensive use of tree diagrams and mathematical type of formalisation. This is currently the youngest and the most influential school.

The Arab scholars, at no stage of the phonetic development, scientific or otherwise, lost sight of its philosophical approach. Arabic was a Divine language and the Qur'an, (the word of God), was revealed in the Arabic language, the acquisition of which meant nearness to God. The learners in non-Arab lands accepted its religious value along with its mundane value. Being thus motivated the non-Arabs even excelled the Arabs in many ways. Persia is the best example. Persians learnt Arabic as a second language, but they excelled to a degree that the first standard book on Arabic Grammar entitled 'al-Kitab' was written by Sibawaih, a Persian, which is considered as a primary source and a reference work up to this day.

**Modern Theories of Language:
Neutral to Value Judgement and
Devoid of Motivation**

It is unfortunate that modern language theories are neutral to value judgment and are devoid of human and philosophical approach to the teaching of a foreign or a second language. Modern empirical methods of teaching and the explosion of the foreign language – Teaching techniques have confused the situation. The teacher and the learner both have become subservient to machines without any human feeling of the language and without any philosophical approach to its culture. Conflicting schools have increased the tension. The traditional grammatical approach and the electrical approach are still in conflict. Some over-emphasise the rules of grammar, believing that language acquisition is based on the acquisition of grammar, while the rivals reject grammar completely. The dogma of linguistic emphasis on grammar and the dogma of communicative competence without too much stress on grammar, have not yet been reconciled.

During the past sixty years a tremendous amount of work has been done on the nature of the language and on linguistic theorizing. Theories have been evolved within the methodology of science in order to prove that linguistics is a science. The discussions of theories have been ordered in that framework. Often such linguistic theorising is divorced from the development both in time as well as in

values. Historical treatment and comparison of theories are often conducted without regard to historical and socio-cultural influence. The terms, now used for the interpretation of a language are similar to those used in the definition of empirical sciences, such as, (1) data, (2) theory and (3) the 'accounting of the data'. For example, the curiosity about the sound and its meaning constitutes the data for a modern writer in linguistic sciences. The investigation begins with the assumption that linguistics is a science and that its purpose is to define the language and its nature without any human and philosophical approach to it.

The detailed study of these theories will reveal that they view language as a particular kind of human behaviour. Some of them consider language as human vocal behaviour. But none of these theories deals with the human and philosophical approach to the teaching of a language.

Communicative Competence in European Languages: Socio-Economic and Political Motivations, Historical Experience - The Asian Case

There can be no objection against the use of technical aids in the acquisition of the language, provided its human and philosophical values are not sacrificed. The human approach or the

sense of respectability is created only through religious, cultural economic or political motivation. The Asian case is a good example in this regard: During the early European colonial era when the Europeans captured the East and launched a drive to establish their languages and culture, they first motivated the Asians towards appreciating the political and economic value of their languages. Good employment and prestigious positions in the society were reserved for those who knew their language, The result was that even the man in the street acquired competence in English, French and Dutch, as the case may be. The Indo, Pak subcontinent produced A - grade poets, orators and writers in the English language. There was no technical aid available at that time. They learnt the language in a short period and with a fast pace due to the strong socio-political and economic motivation. The same thing happened in the Middle East, and in the Far East. It was only after the Second World War that rising nationalisms challenged the foreigners whose languages were replaced by native languages. Yet many countries are still using foreign languages as their official language.

Communicative Competence in the Arabic language. The Religio-Political and Socio-Economic Motivations: Historical Experience - The European Case

The index of motives will show that Europeans became interested in the Arabic language for reasons mentioned earlier. Scholars of scriptures in Europe realised that the knowledge of the Arabic language was essential for a better understanding of the Bible and Torah. Thus they felt the need for learning Arabic for the linguistic interpretation of the scriptures. Albert Schulten (1686-1750) the first famous Dutch Orientalist wrote his thesis in 1707 entitled, 'The use of Arabic in the Interpretation of Scripture'.

This thesis changed the climate of thinking in Europe. All scholars were now religiously motivated to embark on learning Arabic. Edward Peacock and W. Robertson in England and J. Welhausen in Germany studied the scriptures in the same light and achieved competence in comprehension and in reading the Arabic Bible, (one of the earliest translations of the Bible in Arabic extant in the Vatican Library was studied and compared with other manuscripts and was examined critically with a Knowledge of the Arabic language). The urge to elucidate the Biblical cities, geographical areas and historical sites led the scholars to extensive excavations in Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Palestine and other parts of the Middle East. Since most of the places of religious significance, referred to in

(Cont. to page 14)

Hassan bin Thabit: A Poet For Prophet Muhammad And Islam

Hassan bin Thabit was an Arabian poet who lived from 563-674 and was one of the most prominent Sahaba, or companions of Prophet Muhammad. He is best known for his poetic verse venerating Prophet Muhammad, and his work has had an unparalleled influence on Islamic and Arab literature.

Hassan bin Thabit was born in Medina and served as Islam's first poet, travelled widely during his lifetime to cities including Al-Hirah and Damascus. Before settling in Medina and accepting Islam upon meeting Prophet Muhammad, he had won acclaim for his poetry at the courts of Christian Arab kings in Syria and the kings and leaders of al-Hirah in Iraq. In addition to frequently utilizing language from the Quran in his poetry, his work also included references to historical events which have proven to be of great value to historians interested in reconstructing events during his lifetime and the first period of Islam.

Since poetry has always been a foundation of Arab culture, Hassan bin Thabit was effective in helping to spread the message of Prophet Muhammad far and wide within the Arabian Peninsula and beyond. In modern times, poets and Arab literary figures still regard his language and praise of Prophet Muhammad as the most beautiful reflection of his life and divine message of peace to help humanity. One widely known phrase attributed to Hassan bin Thabit is "When the clean forehead of

the Messenger of Allah is seen in the dark, it looks like a lamp that sheds luminous light and eliminates darkness," referring not only to physical appearances but utilizing symbolism to describe how the message of Prophet Muhammad came to Arabs and all people as a beacon of light, hope, and salvation from ignorance and darkness.

According to historians, Prophet Muhammad and Hassan bin Thabit enjoyed a close relationship, and in gratitude for his important poetry the Prophet ordered the construction of a special pulpit for the delivery and recitation of his work to new and established followers of Islam. According to historians the Prophet Muhammad said of Hassan bin Thabit that "Allah supports Hassan by the spirit of his almighty, whenever he frequently defends of the Messenger of Allah."

During a historical period where many still believe in polytheism, and were critical of Prophet Muhammad's monotheistic message, Hassan bin Thabit played a critical role in rebutting criticisms of Islam and Prophet Muhammad through satire of the critical poets. Although Hassan bin Thabit accepted Islam later in his life at age 60, once he became a believer, he was eager to assist in spreading the faith and is reported to have remarked to Prophet Muhammad "O Messenger of Allah! I am ready to help you with my tongue. I will overcome them through

satire,” and went on to state that he would be able to satirize offending poets of the Quraysh tribe in such a way that would not also criticize the Messenger of Allah, a fellow Qureshi. He is widely regarded as having had a distinguished impact for his role is championing true Islam and monotheism, with one verse referring to Allah proclaiming that “You are only having the whole creativity, blessings and the entire matter. We are only guided by you and thee (alone) we worship.”

Hassan bin Thabit is regarded as

one of the most significant mukhadram, a class of poets whose lives spanned both pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. His literary impact would be reflected in later poetry created during the Abbasid caliphate.

His influence within and beyond Islamic literature continues to be felt today as readers experience his poetry and admire his distinguished, satirical defenses of Prophet Muhammad and poetic verse conveying and venerating the revelations of Allah. ■

English & Indian

Vice President M. Venkaiah Naidu on Saturday expressed disapproval of English as a medium of instruction while inaugurating the South Asia Institute of Peace and Reconciliation in Haridwar. He was articulating a widely held view among India’s political class. The problem with this argument is that it frames the issue in a false binary. It’s not a case of English versus other Indian languages. Both are indispensable. English thrives because of a utilitarian value. It opens the door to a rapidly expanding universe of knowledge, whose production is global in nature.

What does the data say? Gol’s annual data on schoolchildren shows that English medium enrolment is growing fast. To illustrate, UDISE Report of 2019-20 put out granular data on 265 million school children. The highlight was that about 26 % of children are in English medium schools, next only to the 42 % in Hindi medium. The trend over time shows that the English medium is set to be dominant in the future. Over a five-year period, Haryana and Telangana witnessed the sharpest increase in the relative proportion of children enrolled in English medium schools. In all, at least seven states have already seen English medium enrolment exceed the medium of instruction in the local language.

Parents have a practical reason to choose English medium instruction. As the National Education Policy 2020 observed, Indian languages have suffered because of an inadequacy of learning material and dictionaries. The problem is compounded by a shortage of skilled instructors. Therefore, the growth in English medium instruction is being driven by aspiration, not a colonial mentality. It offers Indian children an opportunity to tap into a vast pool of knowledge and easily fit into global commerce. Many countries, including Japan and China, are actively promoting teaching of English in their curriculum to equip their students with a tool to thrive in a knowledge economy.

The popularity of English medium instruction doesn’t hinder Indian languages. Here, governments have to accept the responsibility of shortcomings in pedagogical material. This gap can be plugged and governments should not just piggyback on tools introduced by Big Tech firms. A lot more research and development on pedagogical tools need to be done by Gol and states. Indians are uniquely placed to be multilingual, which has positive cognitive effects. Given this, education reforms need clear-headed thinking and not romanticism. English medium instruction is an advantage that needs to be built on. ■

(Editorial, The Times of India 21-03-2022)

The Blessed Month of Ramazan

- Obaidur Rahman Nadwi

Ramadhan is the month of peace, tranquility, piety, righteousness, generosity and bestowal. Of the five tenets of Islam, fasting in the month of Ramadhan is a must every year. During fast one must abstain from eating, drinking and smoking including inoculation and injections from dawn to dusk. In this context the verses of the Holy Quran which ordain for fasting, as an obligatory duty for Muslims are as follows:

“O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that ye may (learn) self restraint.” (Fasting) for a fixed number of days; but if any of you is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed number should be made up from later days. For those who can do it (with hardship), is a ransom, the feeding of one that indigent, but he that will give more, of his own free will, it is better for him, and it is better for ye that ye face, if ye only knew”. (S.2,A.183-184)

Ramadhan’s significance can be gauged from the fact that “the Quran was revealed to prophet Muhammad(PBUH) in this month as a guide to mankind, also clear (signs) for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong). So every one of you who is present at his house during that month should spend it in fasting, but if anyone is ill, or on a journey, the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later. God intends every facility for you; He does not want to put you to

difficulties. He wants you to complete the prescribed period, and to glorify Him in that He has guided you; and perchance ye shall be grateful. (S.2,A.185)

Needless to add that like Salat (Prayers), fasting has been an essential duty for the followers of earlier Prophets. The Bible says that Jesus Christ fasted for forty days (Matthew 4: 1-4, Mark 1:12-13 and Luke 4:1-4). In Peter 2:21 the followers of Christ are enjoined to fast as the Prophet did. Even the Vedas and the Puranas prescribe fasting. Thus earlier peoples fasted though with a difference in the number of days and the prescribed time of fasting.

It should be kept in mind that this particular month has been considered sacred even from pre-Islamic days too. Ibn-Hisham states that the Qurayesh in the days of ignorance spent one month a year on Mt. Hira, practicing penance (Tahannuth). Before instituting fasting of Ramadhan Muhammad (PBUH) evidently observed fast on the tenth of Moharram”. (History of the Arabs, p. 133)

During Ramadhan evil conceals itself while good comes to the fore and the whole atmosphere is filled with piety and purity. The holy prophet says: “The deed of son of Adam is increased several times (in Ramadhan) and the reward is increased by ten times. But Allah says that fasting is exclusively for Him and He Himself will deliver its reward (to His

bondsmen) as he abstains from eating and controls his desires only for Him. There are (two instances) of happiness for the fasting Muslim, one is at the time of breaking his fast and the other at the time meeting his Lord. And verily to Allah, the smell of fasting person's breath is the best and cleanliest." The Prophet of Islam also says: "There is a door of paradise called Rayyan towards which only the fasting will be called. Only the fastings will be called. Only the fastings will enter it and those who enter it will never feel thirsty."

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "when the month of Ramazan' comes, the Gates of Heaven are thrown open, and the Gates of Hell are shut, and the devils are put behind the bar." (In another report, the "Gates of Mercy" are mentioned in place of the "Gates of Heaven." (Bukhari and Muslim)

Salman Farsi narrates that the Apostle of Allah delivered a sermon on the last day of Sha'ban in which he said:

"O my people! You are on the threshold of a month of great solemnity and blessings. It is a month whose one night is better than a thousand months. God has prescribed fasting in this month and make Taraweeh prayers optional Whosoever willingly and with good intentions does one good act in this month will have the merit of having done an obligatory act in other months and one who does a prescribed act in this month it will be equal to seventy prescribed act of other months. This is the month of endurance and the reward of endurance is paradise and this the month of sympathy with and

care of the needy men of the community". (Mishkat)

It is related by Abu Hurairah that the Apostle of Allah said: "Whoever omits even a single fast of Ramazan without the legal concession of a journey etc. or (a valid excuse like that of illness), amends cannot be made for the thing that is omitted even though he observes fasting throughout the life." (Tirmizi)

It is needless to add that fasting is a shield against sins, crimes, vices and other un-Islamic acts. The prophet says: "Fast is like a shield for protection from satan's attack. Therefore, when one observes fast he should use this shield and abstain from quarreling. If anybody abuses him or quarrels with him, he should simply say: Brother, I am fasting do not expect me to indulge in similar conduct (Bukhari & Muslim)

To restore real spirit of fast, it is incumbent to observe it with prescribed rules and regulations. The noble Prophet said: "If one does not give up speaking a lie during fast, God does not require him to give up eating and drinking." (Bukhari).

On another occasion, he said: "Many are the people who fast but who gain nothing from their fasts except hunger and thirst: and many are those who stand praying all night but gain nothing except sleeplessness." (Darimi)

To sum up the fasting according to Islam, is a spiritual discipline and as a consequence it inculcates moral discipline. It also imparts moral strength and leads to the promotion of virtues of piety. ■

Around the World

RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR: DEATHS MIGRATION AND TALKS ON THE GROUND

In city after city around Ukraine, hospitals, schools and buildings where people sought safety have been attacked. The Ukrainians announced that 10 humanitarian corridors have been agreed on with the Russians - one from Mariupol, several in the Kyiv region, and several in the Luhank region. Humanitarian aid deliveries are also planned for the city of Kherson, currently under Russian control.

The Russian military has said that it used its latest hypersonic missile Kinzhal for the first time in combat to destroy an underground warehouse storing Ukrainian missiles and aviation ammunition in the western Ivano-Frankivsk region of Ukraine.

WHAT ARE WORLD LEADERS DOING?

President Joe Biden and China's Xi Jinping spoke for nearly two hours via video as the US looks to deter Beijing from providing military or economic aid for Russia's invasion. French President Emmanuel Macron pressed for an immediate ceasefire in a phone call with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also pressed Putin for a ceasefire in a conversation. ■

CIVILIAN TOLL

The UN human rights office says that it has recorded a total of 816 civilians killed and 1,333 injured since the Russian invasion began on February 24. At least 109 children have been killed since the start of the fighting. More than 140 children have been wounded. ■

RUSSIA-UKRAINE TALKS

Vladimir Medinsky, the head of the Russian delegation in talks with Ukrainian officials

says the parties have come closer to an agreement on a neutral status for Ukraine - one of the key Russian demands as its offensive continues. Medinsky said that the sides also have narrowed their differences on the issue of Ukraine dropping its bid to join Nato. ■

CHINA REPORTS FIRST COVID DEATHS IN MORE THAN A YEAR

Beijing: China's health authorities reported two Covid-19 deaths the first since January 2021, as the country battles its worst outbreak in two years driven by a surge in the highly transmissible Omicron variant. The deaths, both in northeastern Jilin province, bring the country's coronavirus death toll to 4,638.

Both fatalities occurred in elderly patients and were the result of their underlying conditions, Jiao Yahui, an official with the National Health Commission, said. One of them had not been vaccinated for Covid, she said. The majority of new 2,157 community transmissions came from Jilin. The province has imposed a travel ban, with people needing permission from police to travel across borders. China has reported over 29,000 cases since the beginning of March. It has pressed on with its policy of lockdowns and mass testing of millions of people as part a "zero-covid" strategy. ■

WORLD'S LONGEST SUSPENSION BRIDGE:

Erdogan inaugurated a massive suspension bridge over the Dardanelles strait that connects the European and Asian shores of the key waterway. With a 2,023m span, the \$2.8-billion '1915 Canakkale Bridge' is the world's longest suspension bridge, Erdogan said. ■

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