

Islamia

الإسلامية

EVERY FRIDAY

Importance of Reading in Islam

Last week, Brunei Darussalam held its annual book fair, which attracted more than 50,000 people. That number is no small feat; however, the same event attracted more than 80,000 visitors last year. The fair's organisers pointed out that fears of a possible H1N1 outbreak could be behind a downturn in visitor numbers. However, if that is not the case then it is indeed a worrying trend. The fair aims at promoting a reading culture in our country. Being a Muslim society, we already know that Islam places great import on reading and education. In fact, the first verses of the al-Quran that were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him) stressed this very real need for reading.



Visitors looking for books in one of the booth during the Book fair 2010, held at Indoor stadium, Berakas.
Picture: BT/Saifulizam

“Read! In the Name of your Lord, Who has created (all that exists), Has created man from a clot (a piece of thick coagulated blood). Read! And your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (the writing) by the pen” (QS Al-Alaq/96: 1,2, 3)

On another occasion, Allah (SWT) states: “We made the Quran easy to learn. Do any of you wish to learn?” (QS Al-Qamar/54:17).

The message was very clear from that first day and was implemented in letter and spirit by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his companions.

The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged his followers to broaden their horizons by seeking out knowledge – with some going as far afield as China (Bukhari) in their search. He welcomed traders

from different parts of the world to come to Madinah so his followers could learn from them and their respective cultures.

Most Muslims during the early years of Islam were poor and illiterate. Many of them had been purposely kept this way by the wealthy who were no strangers to discriminatory practices.

When the small number of Madinah Muslims triumphed against the soldiers from Makkah in battle at Badr, many of the enemy combatants were held as prisoners. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) asked the prisoners to teach 10 Muslims to read and write in order to win their freedom. Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and the following generations of Muslims took this message to heart, proving to be an impetus for

one of the greatest periods in Islamic history. The truly great Islamic civilization was the one that was based on superior knowledge and adherence to the teachings of the al-Quran and Prophet (PBUH).

During the golden age of the Islamic empire, Islamic scholars flourished on the back of an openness to the sciences, art, and literature. It was during this period that the Islamic world made most of its contributions to the realms of science and art. Outstanding contributions were made in areas of chemistry, botany, physics, mineralogy, mathematics, and astronomy, as many Muslim thinkers regarded scientific truths as gateways to religious truth.

It could be argued that the decline of Muslim civilisation only began when they began

to ignore the importance of education. Nations with superior knowledge and technology started to colonise Muslim countries.

Today, education in many Muslim countries is woefully lacking in comparison to other nations. In the most recent list of the world's top 100 universities, not a single is based in a Muslim country. The number of research scientists and engineers from the Muslim world is also far below that of Latin America. Muslim Ummah must go back to the basics. The time has come for the Muslim Ummah to realise the importance of education and how it paves the way to success in this world as well as in the hereafter.

The Brunei Times



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