



Frank F. Islam



Dr Zafarul Islam



Danish Reyaz



Inspiring Youth of India
with his Exemplary Achievements in such Young Age

Dr. Abdul Subhan

Managing Director, Falcon Group of Institutions
Founder & CEO, Future Education.AI

December 2023

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December 2023

Vol. 8, Issue 4

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Registered Address:

Maeshat Media Pvt. Ltd.
1004, Marwa Tower, Noor Baugh, Mumbai - 400 009

Regional Offices:

Maeshat Media Pvt. Ltd.
105 First Floor, Baitul Wafa, Peace Complex, Wafa Park Road,
Kausa - Mumbai - 400612, Dist. Thane. (Maharashtra)
Maeshat Media Pvt. Ltd.
Kamalalaya Centre
Room No F 29, 156 A, Lenin Sarani, Kolkata 700013

Printed and Published by :

Danish Reyaz

Published from: 801, E-Wing, Wafa Park, Kausa, Mumbai 400612
Dist. Thane, (Maharashtra)

Printed at : Prachita Print Pvt Ltd 13, Markab Building,
N.M. Joshi Marg, Near S Bridge, Byculia (W) Mumbai 400027.

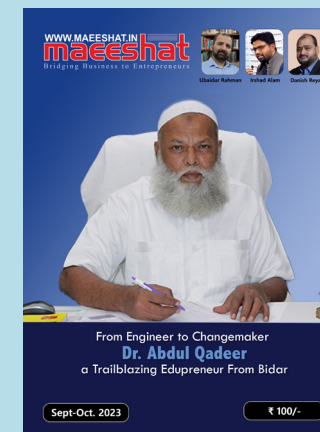
RNI Title Code:-MAHENG13913

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INDEX

► Editorial

04 From the Editor's desk

► Happenings

- 05 Muslim Industrialists Association launched 2nd edition of its flagship event Business Summit 2024
- 06 Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary
- 10 UP government bans the sale of Halal-certified products
- 11 E-retail market in India likely to cross \$160 bn in value
- 12 Muslim personal law says women have share in inheritance
- 13 Assam govt converts 1281 Madrasas into general schools
- 42 Undeclared emergency is more dangerous, but don't lose hope

► Cover Story

14 DR ABDUL SUBHAN, Inspiring Youth of India with his Exemplary Achievements in such Young Age

► Community

38 MemonID connecting One Community with One ID

► Halal Industry

- 40 Top 30 OIC Halal Products Companies 2023
- 48 Exploring Malaysia's Halal Food Mmarket

► Health

44 Understanding Mental Health from an Islamic Psychological Perspective

► Books

46 Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan's translation offering readers a deeper understanding

► Openion

50 Our American democracy is on trial - Frank F. Islam

From The Editor's Desk



By: Danish Reyaz

Not many people forsake a promising career to dedicate themselves to societal causes, not the young generation at least. Allow me to introduce Abdul Subhan from Bengaluru, a Master's in International Relations from Keenly University in the UK who, having worked in the Prime Minister's Office of Turkey and the Indian Ministry of External Affairs, embarked on the mission of his life at the budding age of 25.

He has chosen to work in the field of minority education, with the aim of providing them with top-quality education and helping them prepare for prestigious medical and engineering exams, among other pursuits. A visionary in the truest sense, Abdul Subhan has demonstrated remarkable leadership in building a chain of educational institutions under the banner of Falcon Group of Institutions in just 10 years since he began.

Coaching at Falcon, approximately 1000 students have secured government medical seats through the NEET entrance exam, while about 10,000 have gained admission to top engineering colleges. The impact of his initiatives has been significant on Muslim youths, emerging as their favoured destination where they can be guided in the right direction and enabled to achieve their maximum potential, clearing exams that are otherwise considered tough.

Abdul Subhan has crafted an educational approach aimed

at empowering students, even those from vernacular mediums, to achieve excellence. Through expert handling, individualized attention, and a carefully designed curriculum, he is making significant strides in turning the aspirations of thousands of students into tangible achievements.

The cover story for this month is dedicated to Abdul Subhan and the yeoman service he is doing, surmounting myriad challenges. The feature is inspiring on various levels showcasing his selflessness, unwavering perseverance, and visionary dedication to liberate Muslims from the endemic cycle of poverty and backwardness through education.

Besides this remarkable story, this new edition is also enriched with several other write-ups, including pieces on economics and politics. As usual, important news and events around India and the world are covered in depth to keep our readers updated and enlightened. I expect our readers will embrace this month's edition of Maeeshat with the same love and interest as always. Nevertheless, we encourage you to share your feedback with us.

Thank you! Happy reading.

Muslim Industrialists Association launched 2nd edition of its flagship event Business Summit 2024

Muslim Industrialists Association (MIA) is a Not for Profit Organization Since 2004 working mainly on Entrepreneurship Development.

The Business Summit 2024 which is going to happen on 3rd & 4th February 2024 was inaugurated on 9th December 2023 in the Royal Ball Room of The Capitol Hotel, Bangalore

Mr Naseer Ahmed, Political Secretary to the CM of Karnataka presided and Launched the event.

Mr Abdul Waheed, Founder MIA, Mr. SM Hussian Founder MIA, Mr. Afsar Pasha, President of MIA, Mr. Meer Abdul Hafiz VP of MIA, Mr. Thahir Sharif Secretary of MIA, Mr. Tanveer Ahmed Durgam Joint Secretary of MIA was present during inauguration of the Event

Business Summit 2024 is an initiative of the Muslim Industrialists Association that envisions bringing together Business People, Thought Leaders, Manufacturers, Service Providers, Academicians, and Corporate Heads from various Domains to Cohesively drive a Single Agenda for Scripting Growth.

Business Summit 2024 is about connecting people with Ideas and

those with opportunities! The event is filled 3 parallel activities,

Conference: Business Redefined

The "Business Redefined" conference at Business Summit 2024, held on February 3rd and 4th in Bengaluru,

Biz Expo 2024

Business Exhibition for Retail, Services & Products:

The BizExpo 2024 segment is a dynamic business exhibition where retail, service, and product-focused businesses will showcase their offerings. Attendees will have the opportunity to discover new products, services, and network with exhibitors, making it an excellent platform for business development.

MANTEX 2024

Manufacturing and Technology Expo

Focused on manufacturing and technology,

MANTEX2024 is designed to highlight the latest advancements in manufacturing processes, technology solutions, and innovations. It provides a comprehensive view of the cutting-edge developments in these industries, offering valuable insights for businesses in these sectors.

Business Summit 2024 is not just an event; it's a nexus of ideas, opportunities, and growth. Be part of this transformative journey. Be part of Business Summit 2024



dives into strategic innovation, digital transformation, resilience, and sustainability. It celebrates entrepreneurial spirit and explores consumer-centricity while examining the evolving landscape of leadership and data-driven strategies. This dynamic event aims to equip attendees with valuable insights and fresh perspectives on redefining businesses in a rapidly changing world.

Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary at Prestige Falcon Tower in Bengaluru

Rehbar Financial Services is a Bangalore based company that provides businesses with funding through ethical (non-interest based) modes like operating lease and project finance



Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary in great flair at the fabulous Prestige Falcon Tower auditorium. The state-of-the-art hall was jam-packed; and in attendance were a galaxy of professionals, medical doctors, thought-leaders,

educationists, socially conscious citizens, financial consultants—representing the cream of society. Delegates, speakers and experts in alternative finance came from Chennai, Mumbai, Vaniyambadi and, of course, from different parts of the

bustling metropolis that is Bengaluru today.

Rehbar's distinctive accomplishments were succinctly introduced by its chairman, Mr. Sherif Kottapurath, former CTO of Sun Microsystems. The financial growth of the company



over the past decade was summarized by Rehbar's CFO Zaid Razvi. Following this introductory session, Mr. P.C. Mustafa, of ID Fresh Foods fame, came alive on the huge screen through a recorded video explaining the fascinating journey of ID Foods—from humble beginnings to what it is today: a household name in many Southern cities and towns. He explained how Rehbar played a pivotal role in funding his entire fleet of over 250 delivery vehicles and over a thousand fridges kept in retail outlets for his company's products. He talked about the importance of

values in business and congratulated Rehbar on its growth and on the 10 years milestone. The audience was glued to their seats throughout the speech.

This scintillating talk was followed by a presentation on "Investing in line

with one's value system" by Dr. Ebaad Momin, who is a doctorate from one of the world's finest institutes in alternative finance, INCIEF, Malaysia. The presentation embodied academic vigour that can be expected only from a PhD graduate. Ebaad is one the four directors of Rehbar and also a

partner in Mount Judi Ventures, a SEBI approved venture capital fund. He detailed the way Rehbar works and how it plans to grow so as to bring down operating costs and make it more competitive to businesses who wish to borrow and generate better returns to its investors.



Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary at Prestige Falcon Tower in Bengaluru

The panel discussion on institution building which followed, moderated by another director, Mr. Ali Shariff, a graduate from the London School of Economics, left the audience spellbound. The panel comprised the best known names in the field of ethical funding and alternative economic opportunities. Dr. Shariq Nisar, presented a brief history of the growth of institutions in this field,

claiming that the first recorded institution is nearly a hundred years old. He listed out the chequered history of these organizations and minced no words in pointing out the flaws that the early financial institutions who pioneered the concept of alternative finance suffered from. He, however,

expressed his delight at the emergence of more robust organizations who had remedied the errors of their predecessors. Among these, he listed Rehbar as a financial services company which has built its edifice on strong foundations of trust and professionalism. The other luminary who graced the panel was a leading protagonist of ethical and participatory

banking in India, Mr. Abdul Raqeeb from Chennai. He spoke about his adventures in this realm and how he tried to lobby the authorities to legislate in favour of incorporating interest-free banking in the charter of the Reserve Bank of India. The other luminary among the panellists was CA Mohamed Yunus, CFO of White House, one of Chennai's largest textile manufacturers. He expressed unfettered optimism when asked if more and more socially-conscious people are demonstrating inclination to adopt ethical means of investment.



Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary at Prestige Falcon Tower in Bengaluru

This panel discussion was followed by another lively discussion on the topic: Investing for Women. The two panellists, Madam Tazaiyun Oomer and Madam Nikhat Fathima are well-known activists engaged in uplifting the economic conditions of women in

Bengaluru and Chennai respectively. Both of them are also investors in Rehbar from a long time. The panel was moderated by Madam Ayesha Masood, Managing Trustee of the highly acclaimed Oasis International School of Bengaluru.

Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary at Prestige Falcon Tower in Bengaluru

This event was an opportune moment to honour the people who have striven so hard to lay the foundations of interest-free finance in India. Chief

among them was the doyen of the industry, Mr. M.H. Khatkhatay, an alumnus of IIT Mumbai who single-handedly shouldered the onerous responsibility of designing products and framing policies which were to be eventually utilized by financial services organizations across the country. Rehbar

sincerely acknowledges the deep debt it owes to Mr. Khatkhatay in this regard.

Rehbar Financial Services celebrated their 10th Anniversary at Prestige Falcon Tower in Bengaluru

Dr. Taha Mateen, a well-known activist of Bengaluru, paid glowing tributes to Rehbar for being among the institutions that has paved the

way for the upliftment of people, and called upon the audience to strengthen their hands. He bemoaned the general attitude of the community to hold on to their wealth in the form of precious metals and land, which he termed as

counter-productive for the betterment of society, as opposed to investing in economic activity which would bring in all-round prosperity.

Raashid Sherif, one of the earliest to join Rehbar and now the COO,

ended the session with thanks and an invocation to providence to bless the organisers, the patrons, the participants, the guests and all those who made the event a resounding success.



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UP government bans the sale of Halal-certified products

By: Syed Ali Mujtaba

In an attempt to bring the Muslim factor back into political circulation, the Uttar Pradesh government has banned products with a halal tag, with immediate effect. The move is seen as another dice-throw by the BJP in India's highly populated state to consolidate the Hindu vote bank ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha election.

The UP government order says, "Halal certification of food products is a parallel system which creates confusion regarding the quality of food items and is not tenable under Section 89 of the Food Law Food Safety and Standards Act."

"The right to decide the quality of food items lies only with the authorities and institutions given in Section 29 of the said Act, who check the relevant standards as per the provisions of the Act", the government order added.

The move comes after a police case was filed against a company and a few other organizations for allegedly "exploiting people's religious sentiments" to boost sales by providing "forged" halal certificates.

The complainant raised concerns over a large-scale conspiracy, indicating attempts to allegedly decrease the sale of products from companies lacking the halal certificate, which is illegal, the UP government said.

The case has been registered against Halal India Private Limited Chennai, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind Halal Trust Delhi, Halal Council of India Mumbai, Jamiat Ulama Maharashtra, and others.

"These companies allegedly issued

forged halal certificates to various companies for financial gains, fostering not only social animosity but also violating public trust," the G.O. said.

Responding to the UP government to ban Halal-Certified Products, Jamiat Ulama-i-Hind Halal Trust, in a statement, termed the allegations as "baseless" and said it will take "necessary legal measures to counter such misinformation".

What is Halal certification –



Halal is an Arabic word that means permissible — as opposed to 'haram'. Halal-certified products are those that have apparently met the requirements of Islamic law and are suitable for the consumption of Muslims.

Halal certification is a guarantee that the food is prepared in accordance with Islamic law and is unadulterated. If a product contains animals or animal byproducts that are considered prohibited under Islamic law, then it cannot receive a halal certification.

Specifically, halal foods are those that are made, produced, manufactured, processed, and stored using machinery, equipment, and/

or utensils that have been cleaned according to Islamic law and are free from any component that Muslims are prohibited from eating.

Halal meat meant the meat which has been procured through the process permitted in Islam. The animal has to be slaughtered through the throat, esophagus, and jugular veins but not the spinal cord — as opposed to the jhatka method of slaughtering an animal where the neck gets the blow.

Halal certification is not limited to meat, even some cosmetics have halal certification to denote that they don't contain any 'haram' products like alcohol, pig fat, etc.

India's commerce ministry issued a draft guideline early this year on halal certification. The National Accreditation Board for Certification Bodies (NABCB), and the Quality Council of India have given approval for Halal certificates.

The UP government's move has come with an eye on the 2024 general election to consolidate the Hindu vote bank. The Hindutva elements have been making the noise about the halal certification ban for a long time. It was part of their agenda along with checking love jihad and anti-conversion activities.

This move by the UP government can also be seen as a ploy to control the dietary habits of the Muslims which is anti-constitution. Certainly, this order will be contested in the courts but by the time, any relief comes through, much water may have flown under the bridge of river Gomti.

E-retail market in India likely to cross \$160 bn in value by 2028

The e-retail market in India (both offline and online channels) is expected to cross \$160 billion in value by 2028, riding on factors like improved physical and digital access, enhanced affordability and convenience and emergence of digital ecosystems, a report showed on Wednesday

The e-retail market in India (both offline and online channels) is expected to cross \$160 billion in value by 2028, riding on factors like improved physical and digital access, enhanced affordability and convenience and emergence of digital ecosystems, a report showed.

The market has experienced strong growth post-pandemic, with an estimated value of \$57-\$60 billion in 2023. This represents an annual addition of \$8-\$12 billion since 2020, according to the report released by Bain & Company in collaboration with Flipkart.

The e-retail market is poised to grow in the coming years, with online spending currently only 5-6 per cent of total retail spending in India in comparison with 23-24 per cent in the US and more than 35 per cent in China, indicating massive headroom for growth.

Even as the online channel grows, the offline channel will continue to be crucial.

Majority of India's retail spend (94-95 per cent) continues to be offline, with general trade accounting for 87 per cent of the overall retail spend.

On one side, scale retailers are growing offline presence; on the other, online-first insurgents are adopting omni-channel strategies to grow scale.

"Long-term fundamentals of India's e-retail industry, including affordable data, improved logistics and fintech



infrastructure and strong digital consumer ecosystems remain intact", said Arpan Sheth, Partner and Global Leader of Bain's Innovation & Design Capability Area.

In India, around 240 million shoppers

are expected to participate in e-retail in 2023, with significant headroom to grow given more than 60 per cent internet users are not shopping online vs. only around 20 per cent in the US and China.

"Q-commerce platforms are revolutionising the way consumers shop for their everyday needs. Over the past year, Q-commerce orders have doubled, accounting for 40-50 per cent of India's e-grocery spend", said Shyam Unnikrishnan, Partner and leading member of the Consumer Products & Retail practice, Bain & Company.

The seller ecosystem in India is also expanding rapidly, with twice as many sellers added in 2022 compared to the previous year.

Around two-third of these new sellers came from Tier 2+ cities and around three-fourth operate in lifestyle, home, and electronics categories, the findings showed.

"Despite the rapid growth, the headroom to grow is still tremendous. Retail media spends are only 15-20 per cent of digital ad expenditure in India, compared to 25-30 per cent in the US and 55-60 per cent in China," said Sankalp Mehrotra, Vice President of Monetization, Flipkart.

Muslim personal law says women have share in inheritance: Scholars



Islamic scholars have said that Muslim personal law mandates that women — mother, sister, wife, daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, stepsister, grandmother, and great-grandmother — should get shares in inheritance as directed by the holy Quran.

Islamic scholar Maulana Nasrullah Nadwi, while speaking at a conference of Tafheem-e-Shariat (Understanding of Shariyat), organised under the aegis of All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) at Darul Uloom Farangi Mahal in Lucknow, addressed the issue of women's role in the structure of the family.

Speaking on the subject of 'Women's Share in Inheritance', Maulana Mohammad Nasrullah Nadwi, who is also the secretary of Darul Uloom Farangi Mahal, said, "Islam is the first religion which has given women a share in the property of their parents, husband, and son as per Shariah.

"Muslim personal law mandates that shares in the inheritance be given to mother, sister, wife, daughter, granddaughter, great-granddaughter, step-sister, grandmother and great-grandmother, as instructed by Quran," he informed.

Maulana Mohammad Omar Abidin Qasmi on the subject of Khula Shariah

Nukta Nazar, said, "Islamic Sharia has given the right and authority to a woman to terminate the marriage through Khula if her husband subjects her to oppression and deprives her of her rights."

High Court advocate Sheikh Saud Raees added, "It has been mentioned in the Shariat Application Act, 1937 that the cases in which both the parties are Muslims and those cases relate to Nikah, Khula, Faskh, Tafreek, Talaq, Iddat, Nafka, inheritance, will, Hiba, Vilayat, Rizaat, Hazanat and Waqf, should be decided under Muslim personal law only."

Assam govt converts 1281 Madrasas into general schools



The Assam government has renamed at least 1281 Madrasas across 31 districts in the state and turned them into general schools, officials said.

Taking to his X handle, state education minister Ranaj Pegu shared the information.

He wrote, "Consequent to conversion of all Govt and Provincialised Madrasas into general schools under Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA). Department of School Education, Assam has changed the names of 1281 ME Madrasas into Middle English (ME) School by a

notification today."

The order shared by Pegu read as, "As per approval of the state government, the nomenclature of the 1281 Upper Primary Schools ME Madrassa under Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam shall be known as ME School with immediate effect."

A legislation was passed by the Assam government in January 2021, opening the door for all government-run Madrasas in the state to become general schools.

With the exception of private Madrasas,

it had an impact on 731 Madrasas and Arabic colleges that were part of the State Madrasa Education Board, Assam Higher Secondary Education Council, and Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA).

At a rally in Karnataka in March this year, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared that his government had closed 600 Madrasas and that he intended to close all Madrasas because he preferred educational institutions over Islamic religious centers.

Inspiring Youth of India with his Exemplary Achievements in such Young Age

Dr Abdul Subhan

Managing Director, Falcon Group of Institutions,
Founder & CEO, Future Education.AI



By: Danish Reyaz



*Dr Abdul Subhan with Madhu Bangarappa - Minister of School Primary
& Secondary Education*

Working towards implementation in 1000 schools

Education in India invariably places the whole emphasis on worldly education, creating a bandwagon that is considered to be the only path to success. However, in this bustling landscape of modern education, there stands the Falcon Group of Institutions, where tradition and progress entwine seamlessly, resulting in a highly qualitative education model with a perfect blend of Islamic values.

At the core of this endeavor is a commitment to holistic development – an understanding that education is not just acquiring knowledge but fostering well-rounded growth in terms of both career and value systems.

Falcon is a cluster of educational institutions and education technology companies headquartered in Bengaluru, which also has a presence in Mysuru, Mangalore, Ambur and other cities in Karnataka & Tamil Nadu, expanding at an incredible pace since its establishment 10 years ago.

At Falcon, students dreams are turned into reality, where students are not just passive recipients of information but

active participants in their education journey, equipped with top knowledge and skills to navigate the complexities of the modern world while upholding their faith and moral and ethical principles.

This educational wonderland stands as a testament to the visionary leadership of Abdul Subhan (founder and managing director) and his genuine thirst to shape the future of Muslim youths across the country so that the community benefits from it and transforms into leading a life of dignity, prosperity and contentment.

Through his untiring efforts and rare commitment, Abdul Subhan has consistently propelled Falcon to greater heights each year. From a mere 16 students initially to the current strength of several thousand students, coupled with an admirable success rate in NEET/JEE exams, Falcon has firmly established itself as one of the premier educational destinations for students aspiring to receive quality education as a stepping stone towards a bright career.



Karnataka Assembly Speaker Mr. U. T. Khader interacting with Aspirants undergoing Free Residential Coaching & Mentoring under Falcon Civil Services Academy sponsored by Falcon Foundation

Beyond his educational institutions Dr. Abdul Subhan's continuous tryst to innovate the educational solutions to overcome the challenges faced by all educational institutions including his own with the effective use of technology has given him breakthrough with unique educational ecosystem solution empowering all stake holders in educational system.

This cover story embarks on an insightful journey of Falcon through challenges and its transformative impact on minority education. In essence, however, it is as much a story about the resilience, determination, and ambition of Abdul Subhan, who dreamt of providing a dynamic educational experience that effectively bridges the gap between faith and new-age pedagogy, empowering youth to realize their dreams and unlock their full potential.

Meet Abdul Subhan:

Personality and Early Education

Abdul Subhan is a young man of 35, contrary to the stereotypical image one might conjure for a person of his achievements. Sporting a classic short beard and a perpetual pleasant smile he comes across as a man with neat manners and unwavering confidence in his personality. Moreover, he is a passionate speaker and great motivator. No wonder, his students at Falcon are inspired enough to work hard on their studies, striving for excellence.

"I had the opportunity to win the best orator award at the age of 12 only, so speaking comes naturally to me. I approach everything with passion, and perhaps that helps me speak with conviction and clarity, making an impact on the listeners and motivating them," says Abdul Subhan.

Abdul Subhan's success in a short span

of time is not a meteoric rise or a stroke of luck, as one might erroneously assume. Instead, he has rightfully earned it through the perseverance of his vision, and by acting on his dreams with dogged determination.

The man speaks in a chaste, fluent English with equal ease as he does in Urdu, Hindi and manageable Kannada. This proficiency might yet provide an impression that he could be convent-educated. But the reality is quite different – he studied from Urdu medium and then shifted to Jamiat Ul Quran for Aalim course then Mansoor Boarding School, then from home town he completed 10th Grade from Urdu as medium of instruction, where English is not much emphasized. This intriguing contrast highlights how hardworking Abdul Subhan must have been to carve a niche for himself despite his humble education roots.

From Most Backward District to Silicon Valley of India

After Completion of 12th Grade in Science Stream from Bidar, all his relatives counselled him to opt for Medical but against the trend he didn't opt for Govt. Free Seat that was available due to his good marks, in reputed Engineering Colleges rather decided to pursue Law. Everyone mocked the decision of taking up Law, he wanted to join the best National Law Colleges but failed in the entrance test of NLSIU & NALSAR. However, he learnt that the prestigious Christ College was starting its New Law Course on the basis of personal interview, he found himself with little knowledge of English only a smattering of a few words. He approached his English Teacher with a set of self prepared questions that he expected interviewer would ask, his

English teacher dictated him answers in English which he memorised. Abdul Subhan Well-rehearsed for interview reached Bangalore, the interview was taken by Present Chancellor of Christ University, while taking interview he asked a question which was not expected question to which Abdul Subhan couldn't utter anything but expecting such situation he had memorized one plea of why a Farmer's Son from rural background be given an opportunity. Smitten by innocent efforts Fr. Varghese called Principal to give an opportunity.

This lifetime opportunity meant world to him, but he was continuously told that he was unfit to study at the university level because he struggled to follow his subjects, which were in English. Once principal called him to chamber to communicate that because of him pace of Class is slowed down and he should consider withdrawing

admission, Instead of letting the challenge bog him down, it propelled him to work so hard. Thereafter, he made strict schedule of entering University Library before 8:30am by befriending with security guards upto 9:00pm every day, such that, he once mocked by all now eventually started to represent the university in Various National & International Moot Court Competitions.

"I have an innate quality of not giving up, perhaps shaped by my not-so-smooth background. I knew from the beginning that to achieve something in life I had to excel in my studies no matter what," says Abdul Subhan with palpable satisfaction.

Education is the key to the prosperity of humankind, lifting their lives out of wretchedness and breaking the cycle of poverty. It is the education that, besides imparting knowledge, opens doors to opportunities for a brighter



Mr Abdul Subhan of Falcon Group & Future Education was felicitated by Ministry of Domestic Trade and Ministry of Education, Malaysia



Third From Left: Dr Abdul Subhan With Bulent Aras & other Officials of Prime Minister of Turkey Office

future.

Guided by this cardinal belief, Abdul Subhan has embarked on a journey to educate the youth, particularly those from minority communities facing economic challenges, which often results in their marginalization in various spheres of life. Abdul Subhan, however, never knew initially that educational entrepreneurship could be his calling. In contrast, he had other dreams for his future.

Promising Career before Edupreneurship

Driven by his insatiable thirst for knowledge, Abdul Subhan sought opportunities for advanced studies, eager to carve out a notable path for himself. For a boy hailing from a small area in Bidar, excelling in his studies so far was ample encouragement to dream about furthering his educational journey.

As if fate was smiling upon his

diligence, he was granted an opportunity that seemed like a dream—to pursue a master’s degree in International Relations at Keele University, United Kingdom. Beyond the personal level, it was a significant achievement for his family, neighborhood, and entire community of Bidar that someone from their midst could secure an opportunity to study abroad. Motivated and hardworking as always, Abdul Subhan was given special scholarship recommended by his HoD in University. Along with his Masters he acquired an optional module on ‘Health Policy and Strategy’ under Prof. Calumn Paton, Former advisor to Labour government of Tony Blair. Acquired another optional module on ‘Environmental Policy and Politics of India and China’ under Prof. K. Potter, Former British Counsel to China. Participated in optional module on ‘Global Security’ under world renowned Prof. Barry Ryan, another module on ‘Changing

International Agenda’, under world famous author Prof. John Vogler. Abdul Subhan completed his master’s with flying colors.

“After earning my master’s degree, I nurtured a dream of contributing to the field of policy-making, inspired by figures like Dr. Manmohan Singh and Montek Singh Ahluwalia. Specifically, I aimed to work with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or World Bank,” says Abdul Subhan, “I am thankful to Allah that, in the early stages, I did receive some promising opportunities.”

Fresh off campus, he was invited to join the Prime Minister’s Office of Turkey to work for the public diplomacy division, a noteworthy accomplishment as the first non-Turkish professional in that role. After a fulfilling experience there, he returned to Delhi and seized an opportunity to work in the policy and planning division at the Indian

Ministry of External Affairs. At the young age of 25, he became the youngest to hold such a position, marking yet another milestone in his impressive career.

However, destiny had other plans for him—to engage in something different that could have a lasting impact and direct consequences for the future of youth especially from the minority community.

The Inspiration behind Edupreneurship

Abdul Subhan, from the outset, recognized the paramount significance of education for Muslims—both at the individual and community level. He understood that without education, darkness pervades, casting a shadow on destiny. It is only education that can transform the future of a community.

He reveals, “I have witnessed my father, uncle and aunt’s struggle as they started a school from a room in

their home, where I happened to be one of the first students, among just a handful. I grew up watching and learning from them how important it is for us to contribute in spreading education, not only for individual’s enlightenment but also for shaping the collective fate of the community.”

While this realization always lingered at the back of Abdul Subhan’s mind, the direct impetus to take a plunge into it came right after he returned to Bidar in connection with his marriage. Like any young man, he was pretty happy and excited about the impending married life. Little did he realize that the marriage would also herald a new beginning in his life as a visionary education entrepreneur (Edupreneur).

Abdul Subhan encountered a conscientious gentleman in Bengaluru during a program organized to felicitate him for his early success. The gentleman expressed happiness over Abdul Subhan’s achievements and his aspiration to work at the IMF.

However, at the same time, he said something that had a lasting impact on Abdul Subhan.

“While you will go and pursue your career, the people from our community will continue to live condemned lives due to poverty and lack of education. While you will achieve your dreams, the unfortunate youths here will languish in obscurity.” These were the words that affected Abdul Subhan.

Had there been somebody else, he could have easily washed his hands, saying that he was just a young man yet to fully establish his career and taste the fruits of life. However, Abdul Subhan was raised as a sensitive man. Those words kept ringing in his ears, disturbing him.

The same gentleman took Abdul Subhan along to places like Shivaji Nagar in Bengaluru, an area densely populated by Muslims but yet to see the light of development, as is the case with many Muslim areas in the



Falcon Foundation celebrating the Independence Day featuring 75+ Unsung Muslim Freedom Fighters and sharing thier stories



country. While traversing the area, the gentleman kept mentioning that the children and youths there are directionless and may, despite having talents, wither away due to a lack of proper education. Their dreams will die down even before they are dreamt, he said.

Abdul Subhan was shown a school—nondescript, neglected, and almost non-functional, with only 16 students attending. They were brought to school merely to maintain the pretense that the school was operational, ensuring that teachers could receive their salaries. Nobody cared for the students. He was further told that the conditions of other schools in these areas were no different.

“It came as a shock to me because I never imagined that this could be the situation in Bengaluru, hailed as the Silicon Valley of India. This jolting revelation challenged my preconceived notions about the city’s educational landscape,” remarks Abdul Subhan.

The experience really baffled as well as pained Abdul Subhan so much that he made up his mind to take the cudgels and do something for the education of the children in these areas. And from here on his journey changed in the direction of Edupreneurship.

Finding Support from Wife

Choosing to work in the field of education required Abdul Subhan to relinquish a promising dream taking shape in Delhi. Furthermore, he faced the challenge of convincing his family about his commitment to contribute to the education of our youths just two days before his marriage.

Amidst the great churning in his mind, the marriage took place, followed by the reception. Abdul Subhan now prepared to leave for Bengaluru, surprising everybody with his decision to try his hand at educating youths. This was especially surprising considering the timing of his departure and the unconventional nature of his endeavor, about which everyone was convinced it would end up as an

exercise in futility.

Abdul Subhan says, “My father was disappointed as he had high expectations for me. Yet, deep down, I recognized that embracing my new dream meant following the path he had always urged me to tread since childhood. He used to emphasize that I should strive to do something significant for humanity, beyond just fulfilling my personal dreams.”

“Nevertheless,” says Abdul Subhan with a sense of relief, “my wife turned out to be the most understanding. When I explained to her that I had made a commitment to myself regarding working in the domain of education, she not only supported me but also encouraged me to pursue what I truly liked. She helped me believe in my conviction more than I did. I owe her big time for this.”

Abdul Subhan says that, after the initial inhibition, his family members have come around and been supportive of his mission. However, it is his wife who has stood like a rock behind

him through the thick and thin of his struggle.

Embracing the Struggle

Having reached Bengaluru, Abdul Subhan was prepared to take on the grind of struggle in a city where he had studied but had no one of his own—no friends, no relatives. With only Rs. 6,000 in his pocket and no idea how to go about his mission, except for the strong will to start a model educational institution.

There is a saying that when you have the best of intentions, the universe conspires to help you achieve them. This proved true for Abdul Subhan, who managed to rent a 30-year-old

abandoned building from Waqf to start his institute.

The building had originally been constructed with the aim of hosting a minority educational institution, but it was situated in front of a landfill area where the city’s waste was being disposed of. The building’s infamous location worked against it, and no institution had ever succeeded in running there, leaving it abandoned for years.

Convinced that Abdul Subhan wouldn’t be able to run his proposed institution there, the responsible individuals in charge of the building offered him a 3-month, no-rent agreement. “It was like a godsent

opportunity for me. I didn’t have the money to pay rent from the beginning anyway,” says Abdul Subhan.

Despite beginning the institution, he ran from pillar to post to convince students to enrol there, but to no avail. No one was willing to go to an institute amidst squalor and stench. At last, he approached a Muslim orphanage which agreed to send three of their wards and thus began the journey of Falcon.

Even today, whenever Abdul Subhan reflects on Falcon’s journey, he unfailingly brings up these students. According to him, it seems the blessings (barkat) of those three orphans played a significant role in



Dr Abdul Subhan Conducted Educational Awareness & Career Guidance Campaign across Karnataka in 100 Places for around 1 lakh plus students

Falcon reaching such great heights.”

That year, after the initial three students, another 13 joined, including the sons of drivers, bus conductors, and laborers. However, Abdul Subhan had to put in significant effort, even resorting to offering free admission, to persuade them to enrol.

One of the students who was relatively from a well-to-do background contributed Rs. 10,000 towards the admission fee. Abdul Subhan used this sum to print handbills for advertising his college. He reveals, “I used to get up at 3AM, visit two or three hawkers and personally insert these handbills in newspapers. Afterward, I would head to the mosque for Fajr prayer, distributing these handbills there as well.”

He also mentions that as the classes were about to commence, he realized he hadn’t arranged benches for his students. Financially, it was quite a struggle for him to purchase the necessary furniture. Also, the building being three-decade older needed maintenance regularly.

Falcon, being a residential college from the outset, presented its unique set of challenges. Lacking finances and resources, Abdul Subhan encountered various difficulties, such as the unavailability of a cook, prompting his wife to often prepare meals for the students. The inability to afford a watchman meant that Abdul Subhan

himself stayed with the students until late at night.

He reflects, “Certainly, challenges were plentiful, but I was compelled by an indescribable urge to make a difference in the educational lives of these students. Every time, I manage to find a solution to overcome them by the grace of almighty Allah.”

Why a Residential Setup for Falcon?



*Awarded as one of the highest rated institutions by Kiran Bedi
Former Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry*

Since the moment Abdul Subhan decided to establish a college, he was steadfast in his determination that it would be a residential one. Despite lacking resources, he remained firm in his belief. He insists that the residential system, which he carefully contemplated, was the means through which he could mold the youths and help them realize their full potential.

He also emphasizes that the period of 10+2 is a tricky phase for our youth, as they can be susceptible to various internal and external stimuli. It is essential to comprehensively take care of them at this time, shielding them from all kinds of distractions.

Besides that, Abdul Subhan provides another strong reason for opting for a residential system. He notes that parents in Bengaluru often fall victim to a system of education that involves enrolling their children in a college, arranging additional tuitions for various subjects, and then sending them to coaching centers for entrance exam preparation. This not only incurs significant financial costs but also leaves little time for their children for self-study.

“I thought that if I could eliminate the unnecessary running around of students and provide a comprehensive study solution, including their PU level integrated with coaching facilities, all under one roof and under

my guidance, it would save students from a lot of chaos and energy drain, allowing them to focus better on their studies. On the other hand, parents would also find it to be a more effective and economical arrangement, compared to spending lakhs of rupees for their children’s education,” says Abdul Subhan.

The success stories emerging from



Falcon strongly indicate that students residing in Falcon’s fully supervised hostels are more likely to succeed in competitive exams. Currently, Falcon operates hostel facilities in Bengaluru and Ambur, and a few other branches with plans for expansion to other locations in the near future.

The First Bout of Success

Abdul Subhan poured his entire passion into making his dream come true, recognizing it as a “make or break” endeavor, even though it was his first attempt. He acknowledges, “I faced critics who viewed me as an outsider with total inexperience and unrealistic goals. Failure would mean the premature end of my venture due to a lack of financial resources. My sole chance to make an impact in this field depended on the performance of my students.”

“Fortunately, the initial batch of 16 students excelled, and when the long-term NEET program we started, 9 out of 13 students secured government medical seats in different MBBS

colleges within the state. This success not only garnered significant attention but also paved the way for an influx of students to our institute,” avers Abdul Subhan proudly.

According to him, the success was an outcome of their sincere efforts, the hard work of students, and crucially, the blessings of Allah. It spurred them to look ahead to the future with renewed hope and vigor that, with sustained effort, they could make a difference, however small, in how modern education is imparted and in shaping students into successful individuals with ethical values and moral uprightness.

Making Parents a Stakeholder

Abdul Subhan says that he was satisfied that he could keep his commitment to the parents who, despite knowing him to be a novice, responded to his fervent appeal and took a chance to enrol their children in his institute. He genuinely appreciates their trust in him, acknowledging that,

as a 28-year-old seeking a handful of students to showcase his dedication, their support meant a great deal.

According to Abdul Subhan, the parents deserve even more gratitude, because at the inception of Falcon we didn’t have the state board affiliation for a PU college. Yet, they entrusted their children to us, solely based on witnessing my passion for the academic excellence for their children. Abdul Subhan says, “To address the affiliation issue, I collaborated with a few affiliated colleges, enabling my students to sit for board exams. Not all colleges were willing, but a few agreed because, in turn, it helped them fill the required student quota they were missing.”

Valuing parents has remained a core principle at Falcon. Here, parents, regardless of their financial or educational background, are highly regarded and seen as the primary stakeholders in their children’s future.

Parents are often invited to Falcon campuses and made to realize their



Falcon Degree College providing in-campus internship with 6 on campus companies

importance in the journey of their children. Abdul Subhan not only encourages students to work hard but also emphasizes the crucial role parents play in inspiring their children towards diligence and good conduct.

He impresses upon the need to make parents aware of the detrimental impact of mobile phones, especially social media, on young minds, among other harmful practices such as drugs, alcohol, and bad company. By controlling such practices from the beginning, children can better focus on their studies.

Regarding students, Subhan notes that in present times, they are becoming attention-seekers, expending a lot of energy in emulating their so-called role models from films and cricket and are unnecessarily inclined towards impressing friends and peers. He suggests that children should regard their parents as their role models. Everything they do should be to impress their parents more than anybody else. Adopting this mindset will guide the youth on the right path, motivating them to work hard to fulfil their parents' dreams and elevate their

standing in society.

Passion Knows No Bounds

Abdul Subhan's unwavering commitment to the future of his students goes beyond the ordinary. His dedication is so profound that, during the initial days of running Falcon, he faced an incident that almost jeopardized his life. While he is now hesitant to discuss it, he smilingly describes the episode as "just madness on my part."

It so happened that once during the PU board exam, Abdul Subhan, taking along students from his hostel, reached one of the examination centres in Bengaluru early. However, a few day-scholar students were yet to reach the centre. Believing that they were already on their way and would arrive on time, he left for Mysore via train, where in one of the centres, another batch of Falcon's students were sitting for the examination. He had wanted to be present when they came out of the examination centre so that he could receive them.

Just a few kilometres after the train

departed, he started receiving frantic calls from that group of day-scholar students from Bengaluru, informing him that they were barred from entering the examination hall for being late. Abdul Subhan found himself in an impossible situation to help them as he was on the train. He called the Director, Deputy Director, and all concerned authorities, requesting them to let the students appear for the examination, but to no avail.

Realising it was a matter of the future of his students, he wanted to get off the train and reach the centre by any means. However, the train had its next stoppage at Mysore. He feared it would be too late. He pulled the chain but that went in vain. Faced with a sense of helplessness and desperation now, Abdul Subhan took a daring step. As the train slowed down passing by a railway station, he jumped out of the train, without caring for his life.

He sustained multiple injuries, and his bruised face oozed blood. When an ambulance arrived to take him to the hospital, he beseeched them to take him to Bengaluru instead, to the exam centre, which was turned down

given his serious condition. He says that he didn't remember anything until he regained consciousness to discover he was in the intensive ward of Fortis Hospital, hooked up to medical equipment and machines.

Again, he did an incredible thing here; he escaped from the hospital and reached the examination centre. He appeared haggard, badly bruised, and could barely walk. Witnessing him, his students and their parents were moved to tears, advising him not to do such a rash thing ever. "Our exams are not more important than your life, Sir," they said.

The incident gained widespread attention, becoming a headline in newspapers. Upon learning about it, the education minister of Karnataka summoned Abdul Subhan and assured him of support for his students. At the same time, he cautioned against such drastic actions, emphasizing the importance of Subhan's life for the community.

Today, Abdul Subhan may be modestly downplaying the incident as a crazy

thing to do, but this goes to show his level of commitment for his students. It is this madness and passion on part of Abdul Subhan that has led Falcon to transform into one of the most trusted institutions for students seeking to shape their future.

A Yatra of Self-Discovery

When yatras are mentioned, the image of politicians often comes to mind. However, Abdul Subhan embarked on a different kind of yatra once, driven by a noble cause—to raise awareness about education within the Muslim community. He focused on instilling confidence in the youth and conveying the message that their dreams, no matter how big, are indeed attainable.

For two months, Abdul Subhan traversed Karnataka, reaching every district and taluka. His purpose was clear: to connect with Urdu and Kannada medium students and find out the genuine challenges obstructing their aspirations.

"The yatra was also a journey of self-discovery, drawing inspiration and motivation to work for the

community. To achieve that, I needed firsthand knowledge about educational challenges faced by the average section of the community on the ground," says Abdul Subhan.

According to him, during his yatra, he met around one lakh students. Conversation with them and their parents led him to realize that the main issue afflicting the community is not poverty but a lack of self-confidence. "Due to attending government medium schools, we can't compete to become doctors or engineers," echoed the sentiments of most students, while parents often remarked, "How can the children of the poor like us become doctors? Don't you know only doctors' children become doctors? We shouldn't even think about it."

Abdul Subhan says the yatra was an exercise on his part to dispel the myth that vernacular medium students can't succeed in life presenting many examples, including himself. At the same time, he tried to reignite dreams in them and inspire them to follow right paths to achieve those dreams.



Falcon Tech Kids



Falcon Educaiton Case Study: Wisdom Park International School, Ambur, Tamil Nadu

“The two-month yatra had a profound impact on me, deepening my understanding of the state of Muslim education. It also offered fresh insights and approaches to address these challenges,”

Enriched with the experience gained from the yatra Abdul Subhan introduced a methodology at Falcon that resonates with even ordinary students, providing them a level playing field to improve and compete at the top level. This unique differentiation has led Falcon to grow further and improve its results over the years.

Expanding Footprints, Extraordinary Success Rate

Just within 10 years of existence Falcon has grown in size and stature as one of the top institutes in Bengaluru and other parts for Karnataka as well as in a few southern states. From one ordinary building Falcon has evolved into Falcon Group of Institutions, comprising multiple institutions from colleges, to coaching centres

to schools to academies. It has 8 campuses spread across five different cities in Karnataka, and 13 institutions in the city of Bengaluru.

In a brief period, Falcon has achieved an admirable track record, producing over 1000 doctors and 10,000. This success has not only transformed lives but has also inspired countless others to dream big under its guidance.

When it comes to success rates, Falcon outperforms major coaching giants like Allen and Aakash despite being relatively new to the industry with fewer students. “Falcon has an astounding 51% success rate compared to the 4%-5% success rate of these established names,” declares Abdul Subhan, “Our unique teaching model has proved effective, with numerous examples of even freshers successfully clearing the NEET entrance examination and securing government seats.”

For the last few years, Falcon has maintained a robust annual record of placing not less than 300 of its students

in reputed medical colleges. Abdul Subhan states that Falcon doesn’t have a large pool of students like big coaching giants, only in the hundreds, but a substantial number are among the NEET top rankers. Each year, its tally is improving. In the current year, it has surpassed its previous performance by 300%, marking the best success rate of any institute in the country.

Abdul Subhan says, “There is no medical college in Bengaluru or in entire Karnataka where you can’t find a student from Falcon studying. This has been a great achievement considering how we started at the beginning.”

Without a doubt, Falcon excels in preparing students for the NEET exam with different programs such as NEET long-term and NEET crash courses addressing different requirements of medical aspirants. However, it goes beyond that by also providing comprehensive preparation for the IIT-JEE, Civil Services, K-CET, and CA Foundation. These offerings are integrated with pre-university degree

courses, catering to students across various streams, including Arts, Science, and Commerce.

Effective Teaching Methodology

Joining Falcon Institute brings a host of key benefits designed to propel students towards academic success. The institute provides meticulously structured study materials, ensuring a comprehensive and organized approach to the curriculum. The teaching methodology is highly interactive, transforming classroom learning into an engaging and dynamic experience. Regular tests and assessments are integral components, allowing students to gauge their progress and identify areas for improvement.

Abdul Subhan says, “At Falcon, half the day is reserved for tests. Students are made to take tests on the same day as their learning, followed by a subsequent doubt clearance session. This is followed by comprehensive weekly tests that contribute to the reinforcement of learned concepts and long-term retention in memory.”

He also mentions that students are kept busy with the supply of abundant question bank, ensuring that they have

the necessary resources to master their subjects and perform optimally in examinations.

At the heart of Falcon’s prowess is the exceptional team of faculty—seasoned mentors who infuse the classroom with wealth of knowledge and experience. The distraction-free focused learning environment is well supplemented by motivational sessions that inspire students to strive for excellence. Further, Falcon takes pride in its proven selection track



With Hon'ble CM of Karnataka Shri Siddaramiah at MIA Business Summit 2023

record, showcasing the success stories of numerous students who have excelled under its guidance to inspire the present students.

Inspiring Success Stories

The ever-growing success stories emerging from Falcon are a testament to its commitment to prioritizing the interests of students. Merit is the determining factor, irrespective of a

student’s background. Those from unfortunate, economically challenged backgrounds or orphans can avail up to a 50% scholarship.

Abdul Subhan emphasizes that no one is ever turned away from Falcon’s doorsteps due to financial constraints. In genuine cases, Falcon may exempt the total expenditure for a student in need.

There are numerous success stories that wouldn’t have happened at all if Abdul Subhan hadn’t shown the magnanimity to educate them at Falcon. His selfless guidance and inspiration have paved the way for these students to overcome their various learning and financial challenges, allowing them to script their stories of transformation and success.

Abdul Subhan recounts a few stories that can serve as a catalyst for other students, while they also demonstrate his selfless nature and a clear vision. The students

he talks about ended up succeeding despite coming from a life of utter penury.

He narrates a touching story of receiving a call from Rajasthan, seeking a seat for a brilliant student at his institute. The challenge was that the student, the son of a daily wage laborer, couldn’t afford boarding or food expenses. Undeterred, Abdul Subhan agreed and asked the caller



to send the boy to Bengaluru. The most poignant part was that the boy couldn't even afford the journey. Without hesitation, Abdul Subhan sent him a train ticket. The result? The boy not only cleared the NEET exam with an impressive 655 marks but also secured a government seat in Rajasthan's premier medical college.

Similarly, a distressed mother sought Abdul Subhan's help, pleading for her son's future. The young boy, a product of a Kannada medium government school, faced immense challenges and frustration after struggling to adapt. Discovering him in tears one day, Abdul Subhan asked the reason for crying, to which he replied that he couldn't comprehend English, hindering his progress. Making matters worse, his mother was dying back home due to kidney failure, so he wanted to return. In that pivotal moment, Abdul Subhan advised him to persevere, work diligently, and aspire to become a doctor to heal his ailing mother. Determined, the boy committed himself to the cause,

ultimately achieving the highest score of 663, emerging as the top-performing Muslim student nationwide in the 2019 NEET exam.

It was Abdul Subhan's farsightedness that led to two boys from a single-family becoming IAS officers, possibly the first time for a Muslim family in India. This unfolded when he was in Bidar as part of his mission to select students for free coaching for Indian civil services exams. He chose a student but his father, being unemployed, expressed his inability to even afford food charges for his son. Despite opposition from Abdul Subhan's own family, he extended a helping hand. This act of support resulted in the historic success of the student, marking the first instance in Bidar's history where someone cleared the UPSC exam. It wasn't all – his younger sibling, also under the guidance of Abdul Subhan, became an IAS officer a few years later.

Abdul Subhan has many such stories to tell but stops, acknowledging that it will be a never-ending affair since

every year, students from challenging, hopeless backgrounds continue to excel at these demanding entrance exams. His words hold truth. If we look at the results of the 2023 NEET exam, the top performers from Falcon are sons and daughters of autorickshaw drivers, motor mechanics, daily wage earners, single mothers, Imams of mosques, among others.

Abdul Subhan takes immense pride in stating that his most significant accomplishment is igniting hope among the underprivileged. "Today, numerous small-time earners and even the unemployed approach me with their children, expressing their aspirations for them to become doctors and engineers. They now have this trust and confidence, which was missing until a few years back," he remarks with satisfaction.

The Different Institutions of Falcon Group

In a decade of proud existence, Falcon has created numerous institutions spanning colleges, academies,

schools, and a foundation. These institutions play a pivotal role in providing exceptional education and preparing students for various entrance examinations, contributing to their successful career paths.

Falcon Group's Colleges

The Falcon Group of Institutions has two colleges with various branches—one dedicated to the 10+2/PU level and the other for the degree level, the latter being exclusively for girls. These two colleges have been groundbreaking in the way education is effectively delivered to students, guiding them on the path to success.

Falcon PU College

Falcon PU College, the inaugural institution of Falcon, stands as a testament to the realization of Abdul Subhan's dream. Recognizing the imperative need for quality education and proper guidance for Muslim youths aspiring for a better future, this college came into existence only with the dogged determination of Abdul

Subhan.

What began in a small derelict building has now burgeoned into eight Falcon PU Colleges across five cities in Karnataka: Bengaluru, Mysore, Mangalore, Ambur, and Sindagi. Among these, Bengaluru alone boasts four campuses situated in Queens Road, Jaya Nagar, Vijaya Nagar, and LR Bande.

Besides educating students to shape their careers, Falcon also gives utmost priority to grooming them into fine individuals with a hunger for knowledge, rationality, and critical thinking—all in perfect blend with traditional and religious values, fostering their holistic growth.

"It is a common experience that students from Urdu and government medium backgrounds are found to be faltering at the PU level. Falcon PU College addresses this concern with thoughtfully designed curriculum and teaching methods by our expert faculty, enabling students to excel at their studies," says Abdul Subhan.

The uniqueness of Falcon lies in its integrated coaching facility, which not only caters to students for PU level courses but also provides in-house integrated NEET/JEE coaching. This puts our students at an advantage as they can excel in these entrance examinations alongside their PU board exams without wasting precious year.

"Many of our students have achieved success by clearing entrance examinations in the same year they complete their pre-university board exams," asserts Abdul Subhan.

He goes on to mention that as they gained recognition for supporting science students, a crucial realization struck them—the job prospects in the field of science are limited, while approximately 80% of jobs demand professionals with a commerce background. In response, Falcon PU College introduced a commerce stream, offering top-notch board education. Simultaneously, they provide specialized training in finance and accounting through their



meticulously crafted CA Foundation course.

“The curriculum includes practical training in Tally and GST software, coupled with digital marketing skills, preparing our commerce students in advance to harness the potential of online marketing in their future careers,” informs Abdul Subhan.

Falcon Degree College for Girls

Falcon Degree College stands as a beacon of hope for girls, offering comprehensive educational solutions aligned with Islamic values. Here, girls are free and encouraged to observe their faith and practices, including offering their namaz and wearing a hijab or even a burqa if they so desire.

Initially established to cater to boys due to limited resources and infrastructure, Falcon PU College gained attention for its remarkable results and its adherence to Islamic teachings. It led to parents expressing their wish to get their daughters educated at Falcon as well.

Abdul Subhan recalls one such incident when a gentleman approached him to enrol his daughter at Falcon. However, he was disappointed upon learning that it was only for boys. But according to Abdul Subhan it was a transformative encounter which eventually led to the establishment of Falcon Degree College for Girls.

He says that the gentlemen posed a

compelling question to him: “Would you like to be held accountable before Allah in Qayamat for not doing anything for the education of the girls?” The profoundness of the question got Abdul Subhan thinking.



The gentleman highlighted his reluctance to send his daughter to other colleges where she would have to wear a skirt, a choice he wasn't prepared for.

Recognizing a glaring lack of a model

educational institution that could not only deliver top-notch education but also uphold the sanctity of Muslim girls' choice of dress, Abdul Subhan initiated Falcon Women College for Girls. He laments, “Imagine how many girls had to drop out of education simply because colleges wouldn't allow them to wear their preferred dresses.”

Today, Falcon Degree College stands as an admirable model, providing a comfortable Islamic atmosphere for girls alongside excellent education. It offers diverse courses, including B.Com, BBA, and BCA. Nevertheless, another aspect that sets it apart from other colleges is its innovative internship approach.

Acknowledging the vital role of real-world experience, Abdul Subhan says, we have made strategic partnerships with in-campus incubated companies that provide our students spanning across various disciplines essential training through internship. We, thus, seamlessly connect classroom learning with professional success.

Falcon Degree College for Women transcends being a mere institution; it acts as a launchpad for women who are not just academically strong but also professionally adept to succeed in the corporate

world as soon as they pass out from here.

Falcon Group's Academies

Besides the top colleges, Falcon has a few academies dedicated to

uniquely and effectively coaching students for several entrance exams, as well as imparting skills to boost the employability of our youth. In these academies, specialized programs are designed to cater to the diverse needs of students, ensuring a holistic approach to education and career development.

Falcon NEET/IIT Academy

Falcon NEET/IIT-JEE Academy stands as the flagship institution within the Falcon network. It serves as the crucible where medical and engineering aspirants undergo intensive coaching to conquer these challenging exams. The consistent and impressive results achieved year after year bear witness to Falcon's dedicated and effective teaching approach. Teaching at Falcon is aimed at developing concept and its application in the context of emerging examination trend and pattern.

So far, over a thousand of our students have secured medical seats in prestigious medical colleges, while over ten thousand people have been

able to secure their seats in top-tier engineering colleges. In the NEET exam particularly, it has an outstanding 51% success rate, the highest success rate among any coaching institute.

The academy has diverse programs such as fresher, repeater, and crash course programs suiting to diverse requirement of students. Abdul Subhan states that at Falcon, we provide personalized care for students, systematically assisting them in comprehending and mastering their subjects through regular tests, doubt clearance, ample study materials, including a robust question bank. Simultaneously, in a meticulous manner we ignite their hunger for success and boost their confidence, enabling them to navigate through these challenging exams with no anxiety.

Falcon Civil Services Academy

Falcon IAS Academy is a sincere initiative by Falcon to propel Muslim youths into leadership roles. Falcon's

comprehensive and effective guidance, complete with integrated hostel and library facilities for the aspirants preparing for the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) and Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) exams has established it among the best in the industry.

The well-versed faculty here is adept at teaching complex subjects and concepts, following an updated and well-structured curriculum, and providing students with exhaustive but to-the-point high-quality study material. The excellent mentoring program by seasoned experts and ensuring tailored support and personalized guidance.

Abdul Subhan says, “Helping youths reach the cream of Indian services has always been my passion.” Alongside running Falcon PU College, Abdul Subhan mentions that he used to hunt talents across India at his own expense, bringing them to Bengaluru and subjecting them to rigorous coaching, he recalls one incident when he was discouraged to select such students





from district like Bidar saying no one in history has ever cracked UPSC and why I am wasting my resources but wanted to be a changemaker and he selected 2 students for Free Coaching at Bangalore Centre, today Mohammed Nadeem is an IPS officer & his younger Brother Cracked UPSC in 2021 in 1st attempt now serving IAS in Karnataka Cadre” he believes that “for every big change small start is must”.

The success of his students in India’s top-most exams boosted Abdul Subhan’s confidence and emboldened his conviction in what he was doing. Falcon Civil Services Academy is the result of that passion, now successfully turning the dreams of our youth into reality. By producing officers at the top level, Falcon is also providing a much-needed voice to our community which has remained absent for a very long time.

Falcon Skills Academy

Falcon Skills Academy has emerged as the destination for various skill development courses designed to help our youths to navigate the fiercely competitive job market with confidence. The specially crafted courses cater to high-demand areas

such as Digital Marketing, Graphics Designing, TALLY & GST, Software Development etc.

“Not becoming a doctor, engineer, or a civil servant is not the end of the world. There are ample areas where our youths can showcase their talent and earn respectably. This was the main idea behind establishing Falcon Skills Academy,” reveals Abdul Subhan.

These expertly curated courses not only boost the employability but also helps those who want to explore new opportunities or just want to expand their skills repertoire. The courses are taught by industry professionals bringing their real-world insights to the learning experience with hands-on training and lucidly designed curriculum, all keeping pace with the latest industry trends. This contributes heavily not only towards acquiring valuable skills but also graduating with the assurance needed to thrive in one’s chosen fields.

Falcon Group’s Schools

The Falcon Group also includes schools and preschools in its network of institutions, ensuring a strong foundation for students before they

advance to preuniversity level and take entrance exams for more successful careers.

In addition, starting technological learning at a young age not only provides them with a head start but also sets the stage for gaining an advantage in the later stages of their lives.

Falcon E Techno School (Grade 6 to 10)

Falcon E Techno School marks the first addition of a school to the Falcon Group of Institutions, now proudly stands as a model school delivering quality education from grades 6 to 10 with emphasis on building a robust foundation for competitive exams.

Excelling at PU level and beyond in competitive examinations calls for a strong base at the school level. Regrettably, many schools either lack the necessary commitment or are not adequately equipped to develop a strong base essential for students’ onward journey in the future.

“More often than not, the students we used to receive lacked a solid foundation, necessitating us to work harder on them. This inspired the idea of establishing a school to address this

gap and create a foundational platform for students to comfortably gear up for their future endeavors,” says Abdul Subhan.

The most important aspect of this school lies in the integration of technology for a better outcome. Students study through Smart Books aligned with the NCERT and NCF 2023 curriculum. These books offer in-depth analysis of core concepts, covering all topics in each subject. For exam practice, the books prepare students in a hassle-free manner with questions set in examination patterns. Furthermore, there is a Foundation Corner for NEET, JEE, and Olympiad preparation where questions are aligned with the latest Competency Based Education (CBE). Overall, students benefit from engaging content, ensuring a thorough understanding of subjects and a competitive edge in exams.

Falcon E Champ (Grade 1 to 5)

Falcon E Champs introduces an integrated semester series tailored for

grades 1 to 5, aligning seamlessly with the National Curriculum Framework 2023. This innovative approach aims to streamline education by consolidating various subjects into a single book for each semester. The design not only lightens the physical load on young students but also fosters a comprehensive understanding of diverse subjects.

In total alignment with the pedagogical principles of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, our model emphasizes multi-dimensional approach to deliver a holistic and engaging learning experience. It focuses on developing creativity, critical thinking, communication and problem-solving skills while fostering emotional development, experiential learning, and team spirit. Thus, Falcon E Champs goes beyond traditional education, nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills needed for the future.

Falcon Tech Kids Preschool (Pre KG, LKG, UKG)

Falcon Tech Kids is a pioneering

preschool seamlessly combining Islamic education with modern technology. It aims to create a distinctive learning journey, integrating foundational Islamic teachings with cutting-edge tools like Augmented Reality (AR) and Gamification, fostering a holistic development in children—spiritual, cognitive, emotional, and social—drawing inspiration from global early age teaching pedagogy in Japan and Malaysia. The mission is to acquaint children with both timeless values and essential technological skills for the modern era.

The Falcon preschool model focuses on 6 key dimensions to provide a holistic and engaging learning experience for preschool children such as cognitive skill, physical and emotional growth, Islamic values, environmental awareness, technological enrichment, as well as family integration and parental involvement.

Abdul Subhan reasons that at this premature age, students are more receptive to developing faith-based learning and imbibe a value system.





Even technology adoption at this age allows them a head start for the future.

Falcon Tech Kids boasts thoughtfully designed classrooms, modern facilities, and spacious outdoors that not only ensure a safe and engaging space for a child's exploration but also promote active play and connection with nature. In addition, in an inclusive and supportive atmosphere, every child is valued and encouraged to have a highly curious mind and unlock their full potential.

Falcon Foundation

Besides Falcon's educational initiatives, there is another dimension to its social commitment: Falcon Foundation spearheads impactful initiatives for the community and students. During the COVID-induced lockdown, the institution conducted a Food Distribution Drive, reaching different parts of the city and roads to provide essential food items to the poor and needy. Recognizing the impact of the pandemic on education, Falcon Foundation conducted a Door-to-Door Survey in slum areas

of Bangalore Central City to identify and address the rising issue of 'Drop Out' children, ensuring their return to school.

Abdul Subhan informs, "Amidst participating in various societal causes, the foundation also collaborated with the 'Save Constitution Committee' in launching a book on the 'Myth of Population' by Ex-Chief Election Commissioner Dr. S.Y. Quraishi."

In terms of prioritizing education, Falcon Foundation provides scholarships for deserving students, including special categories such as the girl child, financially backward students, orphans, the handicapped, and the wards of religious scholars. This also includes children who lost their parents during pandemic.

The foundation also organizes the Falcon All India Talent Hunt Examination (FAITHE), selecting students from across India for free UPSC/KPSC coaching. Moreover, Abdul Subhan says, Falcon Foundation actively contributes to the education of NEET aspirants, offering free coaching to high-achieving students

such as those who secure 97% and above in their PU board exam and who have secured 450+ marks in their previous NEET exam.

Further expanding its impact, Falcon Academy's Finishing School empowers graduates with intensive courses for comprehensive personality development and specific skill sets, enhancing their employability prospect. The institution also offers Arabic and Islamic classes during evenings and weekends, focusing on instilling moral education in children. Additionally, Falcon Foundation plays a crucial role in ongoing career counselling, assisting students in making informed decisions about their future and preparing them for competitive examinations.

Falcon As Educational Solution Service Provider

In just 10 years, the Falcon Group has expanded its footprint exponentially, not only by creating various institutions but also through ambitious partnerships with external institutions. Led by Abdul Subhan, Falcon has

reimagined and revitalized these institutions.

A prime illustration is the Wisdom Park International School in Ambur, which was on the brink of closure due to a dwindling student population. However, through Falcon's strategic partnership, the same school saw a remarkable increase from 120 to 500 students in just two months. Today, it stands as one of the most sought-after CBSE English medium schools in Ambur, boasting 1300 students and achieving prolific academic results.

From 1 School to Supporting 1000+ School in Educational Excellence

Following Wisdom's success, Falcon tied up with a few other institutions. But for Falcon expanding its reach in this manner required a lot of manpower, which it lacked. So, it changed its approach and began supporting struggling institutions with its uniquely developed system and newly designed curriculum, while utilizing the existing infrastructure and manpower of these institutions.

Abdul Subhan explains, "It took us four years of R&D and crores of rupees to develop an impeccable system that seamlessly addresses challenges of new age learning like machine learning, coding, artificial intelligence, and robotics."

This comprehensive system, named Future Tech School, includes individualized apps for students, parents, teachers, and management, all connected within one ecosystem to optimize learning outcomes and

satisfy each stakeholder.

Future Tech School goes beyond textbooks, offering a dynamic learning experience through phygital tech books and the aforementioned dedicated mobile app. The app provides interactive e-textbooks, virtual labs, coding, and robotics courses, empowering students to excel in the 21st century by exploring subjects beyond the traditional curriculum.

Abdul Subhan highlights that thousands of schools are benefiting from Falcon's services, enhancing their performance in various ways.



Falcon's support extends to many prestigious school brands through its platform, and this collaboration is anticipated to grow in the future.

Awards And Recognition

Abdul Subhan's journey stands as a testament to his exceptional contributions and tireless dedication, and this hasn't gone unnoticed. Throughout his remarkable career, Abdul Subhan has garnered praise and acclaim for his transformative initiatives, earning him a well-deserved place among the distinguished individuals who have made significant strides in creating meaningful positive change in society.

Below is the list highlighting the numerous accolades and honors bestowed upon Abdul Subhan individually and Falcon Group in general, acknowledging their outstanding efforts and enduring impact.

1. Bharath Vidya Shiromani Award was presented in New Delhi to Falcon Group
2. Vidya Ratan Award by the Institute of Economic Studies
3. National Award for Business Excellence by His Excellency Thawar Chand Gehlot, Governor of Maharashtra & presented by Ms. Kiran Bedi

4. Recommended by Karnataka Chief Minister, Assembly Speaker, Political Secretary to CM, other Cabinet Minister for the Highest Civilian Award, Karnataka Rajyotsava Award for Educational Excellence to Falcon Group.

Amidst a cascade of accolades, Abdul Subhan remains poised to receive more in the near future.

However, he exhibits a grounded demeanor, expressing that the smiles on students' and parents' faces upon success serve as his most significant awards and powerful motivators. In his humble perspective, Abdul Subhan emphasizes that while awards have their significance, they aren't everything. Regardless of recognition, he believes in steadfastly pursuing what he loves for the betterment of society.

Abdul Subhan's Message to Muslims

Abdul Subhan is a visionary thinker and a fervent advocate for the upliftment of his fellow Muslim

community. Reflecting on the condition of Muslims in India, he remarks that they seem besieged by propaganda, largely fuelled by media controlled by the government.

According to him, the real aim is to undermine the confidence of Muslims who, after years of inertia and indifference, have gradually shown promising signs of change from the years-old cycle of poverty and educational backwardness. The psychological pressure placed on Muslims is significant.

However, he cautions Muslims not to be distracted by this tactic from the right wing aimed at keeping them in check. Drawing parallels, he notes that Jews have faced similar, even worse situations, yet emerged stronger by focusing on education and economic advancement. Muslims, too, must follow suit. Instead of becoming reactive to provocations, they should channel their energy into educating their society, leading to prosperity and an increased contribution to the country.

Abdul Subhan says, “When a community becomes economically strong and its contributions to national development increase, the voices against it gradually fall silent or loses force. Furthermore, a well-educated and prosperous community can effectively tackle propaganda and biases against it.

Nevertheless, he isn’t pleased with the current level of effort being made to improve the educational standing of Muslims. He remarks, “Muslims still lack a sense of urgency. We must realize that other communities are far ahead in development. Even communities considered backward are progressing at a faster pace than us. If we don’t make efforts proportionate to our needs, we will lag behind them indefinitely.”

He emphasizes the importance of inspiring youth to dream big and providing the necessary support for them to achieve those dreams. They should be groomed for leadership roles at the highest levels, whether in services, bureaucracy, businesses, or other professions. This influence can not only shape the future of our community but also serve as an inspiration for other youths to follow in their footsteps.

Our outlook towards religious education must also undergo a sea change. We have wrongfully separated it from modern education. Madrasa education shouldn’t be the end of it. Instead, we must find ways where religious and modern education can go hand in hand so that our youth become role models for society, excelling both morally and professionally upon completing their education.

Abdul Subhan underscores the need for Muslims to get their priorities right, with the singular focus for both parents and their children being education, nothing else. He vehemently opposes the idea of extravagant spending on marriages, ceremonies, or leading a lavish lifestyle. According to him, these are colossal wastes of money that could be better used to ensure the best education for their children.

For those who are already wealthy and providing their children with excellent education, Abdul Subhan suggests considering spending their surplus money towards the education of less fortunate ones. Only through such collective efforts, he believes, can our community emerge from the throes of poverty and advance towards a better future.

Conclusion

Abdul Subhan’s Falcon Group of Institutions has emerged as a transformative force, dedicated to providing invaluable education and

shaping the future of Muslim youths. Despite facing challenges, Abdul Subhan’s unwavering commitment for the cause of education has been truly commendable.

His model, emphasizing academic excellence with uncompromising adherence to Islamic values, is a testament to the positive impact education can have on individuals and society. The impact of his initiatives extends far beyond the classroom, contributing to the broader Muslim society’s development and progress.

As we witness the positive transformations brought about by Abdul Subhan’s selfless and stellar works, it becomes evident that his model is not just a local success but a blueprint that should be replicated elsewhere in the country. The need for others is to take a leaf out of his life and his struggle to move forward in this direction. More such institutions would only strengthen the community in achieving educational progress and economic well-being, for that matter.

The value of his service to education is immeasurable, laying the foundation for a more educated, empowered, and morally conscious Muslim society that contributes to the progress of the nation. At 35, Abdul Subhan is still sprightly, and the community stands to gain even more from him in future, given his exceptional innovative mind and dynamism.

Maeeshat, in recognition of his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to education with a selfless heart, extends its heartfelt gratitude and conveys best wishes for success in all his current and future initiatives and endeavors, shaping a positive future for Muslim youths and society as a whole.

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MemonID connecting One Community with One ID

Rubaid (Ali) Bhojani is a social entrepreneur hailing from a small town in Parbhani, Maharashtra. The town was small but not his ambitions. An ambition to bring an entire community of 3.5 million on a single platform was his idea which gave birth to Memon ID.

He is the founder of Memon ID. Memon ID may seem just another community ID but it is a revolution in the making. Not only will it streamline the entire community, but it will give them a true unique identity. Ali has been an active member in inter-community development since a decade and has played a major role in formation of policies which have directly resulted in changing and transforming the lives of millions of Memons in India. He is a multitasker and is currently associated with multiple NGO's consulting on various civic issues.

Memon ID, is conducting a survey to assess the socio-economic and educational condition of the Memon community. The survey, conducted through the www.memonid.com website & 'memon ID' app, aims to gather data on the community's population, demographics, and needs. The Memon community originated from Lohana Hindus in Sindh and embraced Islam in the 16th century. The community, known for its business acumen, has

a global presence with an estimated 3.5 million members worldwide. The survey has revealed professionals such as doctors, CAs, architects, pilots, judges, and retired IAS officers within the community. Efforts will be made to encourage young Memons to appear for various competitive, civil & judiciary exams. The survey will also help identify families in need of housing and healthcare & economic support.

Survey is conducted in 500 jamats of

unopposed.

To get a better perspective, we meet Rubaid Ali Bhojani, a Social Entrepreneur who is associated with numerous social works & NGO's, including survey of the Memons. Opening the website on his sleek laptop, Bhojani explains: "Every Memon has to register himself or herself either on www.memonid.com or the app 'memonid' on Android and apple app store. From birthdate and blood group to employment status and educational qualification, we ask members to fill in all the vital information. We also have a column on the family tree which will let us know about the families' ancestry."

How did the Memons originate? They were originally Lohana Hindus in Sindh (now in Pakistan). In 1524, around 700 families or 7,178 people embraced Islam on the hands of Syed Yusufuddin Qadri,

a fifth generation descendant of Sufi Saint Abdul Qadir Jeelani, buried in Baghdad (Iraq). From Sindh they moved to Kutch and Saurashtra and Kathiawad regions in Gujarat.

Basically, a business community, the Memons spread to far-flung places, from Mumbai to Mozambique, Karachi to Kazakhstan. According to an estimate, there are 3.5 million Memons globally. Out of it, 1.5 million are in India, including 3 lakh in

Mumbai & Approx 20 thousand in Bangalore.

Contrary to popular belief, not all Memons are into business. Bhojani says that the survey so far has shown that there are around 250 doctors, 60 CAs, around 100 architects, a couple of pilots, some judges and two retired IAS officers in the country. "Not many youngsters from our community appear in civil services exams and therefore we do not have many IASs or IPSs. Once the survey is over, we

will see how we can encourage our youngsters to appear at MPSC and UPSC exams," says

Officer

Efforts will also be made, says Sohail

survey will be confined to India. We will expand it to the world Memon community later," says Khandwani.

Memon ID is providing following services to their registered members :



handwani, patron of World Memon Organization and AIMJF's vice-president, to identify the families which need help for housing and healthcare. "We cannot reach out to the needy families judiciously unless we have the community's complete data. Initially the



Rubaid Ali Bhojani has extended this technology to other communities such as kokani, khatri & cutchi memons, and looking forward to help other communities looking forward to get organized in their social activities by providing a tech platform to their registered members.

With inputs from the article of Times of India by Mohammed Wajihuddin,

Top 30 OIC Halal Products Companies 2023



By: Shaik Zakeer Hussain

Salaam Gateway, in collaboration with DinarStandard, has released its inaugural list of the top 30 halal products companies based in OIC (Organization of Islamic Cooperation) member countries. While the OIC markets command the majority of the \$1.595-trillion halal food, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics consumer market, recent data from DinarStandard reveals a notable trend: non-OIC countries continue to dominate exports of halal products to OIC states.

The 'Top 30 OIC Halal Products Companies' list showcases a diverse mix of large regional enterprises poised to drive strategies for halal market growth across the 57-member trade bloc. The rankings highlight key countries from Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the GCC, with Indonesia standing out as the leader with 15 companies. Malaysia follows at a distance with five firms, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE contribute four and two companies, respectively. The evaluation criteria included intra-OIC exports and halal market initiatives.

Biofarma Indonesia secured the top spot on the rankings, with Malaysia's Duopharma Biotech, Indonesia's

Indofood CBP Sukses Makmur and PT Paragon Technology and Innovation, and UAE's Al Islami rounding off the top five.

The Southeast Asian halal products companies dominate the list, capitalizing on their expansive Muslim population, growing consumer halal awareness, regional trade links, and supportive regulations governing local halal industries. Government regulations facilitating halal certification for food, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetic products have propelled these companies to serve 240 million Muslims, forming a formidable consumer force.



Halal industry companies in the GCC are thriving, particularly in the halal food sector. Four Saudi halal food companies – Bateel, Almarai, Savola, and Americana – made the ranking, alongside UAE's retail giant Lulu Group and Al Islami.

An interesting observation indicates a rising trend of halal awareness and compliance extending beyond food, particularly in Southeast Asia. Additionally, more companies are incorporating ESG (environment, social, governance) and halal as



integral parts of their business value proposition.

Halal Food Takes Center Stage: Palm Oil and Meat Processing in Focus

Palm oil, a crucial commodity exported by OIC countries, takes the spotlight as one of the largest and most important. Indonesia and Malaysia, the world's leading palm oil exporters, have seamlessly integrated halal compliance into their products. Companies like FGV, Sinarmas, and Musim Mas, major palm oil producers, have secured positions on the list.

The halal food industry across OIC countries relies heavily on vast and growing markets, such as Indonesia and Saudi Arabia. Indofood, the largest Indonesian food processing company and the world's top noodle producer, claims the third spot on the list, leading the halal food sector. GCC-based companies like Savola,

Almarai, Americana, and Al Islami, known for halal meat processing and dairy production, also feature prominently.

Halal Pharma: Southeast Asia Takes the Lead

The pharmaceutical industry, a knowledge-intensive arena requiring long-term commitment and technical capabilities for halal compliance, sees Southeast Asian companies dominating. The Covid-19 pandemic has accelerated the momentum for halal vaccines and biopharmaceuticals. Biofarma, Southeast Asia's largest vaccine producer and the OIC center of excellence for halal vaccines, secures the top position. Malaysia's Duopharma follows, recognized for its efforts in driving halal innovation and raising awareness of halal pharmaceuticals.

Halal Cosmetics: Local Brands on the

Rise

Original OIC cosmetic brands are gaining prominence, with names like Paragon, BeautyHaul, Victoria Care, and Conatural Beauty entering the mainstream. Some companies are expanding their halal product offerings, such as Paragon with the launch of Kahf, a halal self-care and cosmetics brand for men. Emerging local brands like Somethinc from Beauty Haul, an Indonesian halal beauty startup backed by Sequoia Capital, have recently gained significant success.

The unveiling of the top 30 OIC Halal Products Companies sheds light on the vibrant and growing halal market, driven by a mix of established players and emerging innovators across various sectors.

Undeclared emergency is more dangerous, but don't lose hope:

G G Parikh

Days before he completes his century, veteran Gandhian and social activist Dr G G Parikh said that an undeclared emergency is far more dangerous than a declared 1975 emergency.

Dr Parikh, who will turn 100 on 30 December, was speaking at the Mumbai Press Club's RedInk Awards event in Mumbai. A grand felicitation with a standing ovation was accorded to Dr Parikh at the majestic Royal Opera House in Mumbai in recognition of his contribution to the Freedom Movement and social reform.

Dr Parikh, who is among the oldest activists alive of the Mahatma Gandhi-led Quit India Movement and was put behind bars by the British, was also jailed during the Emergency of 1975-77.

Speaking about the current scenario and the witch-hunt against media

Veteran Journalist



ignored. However, I see hope ahead," he said and added that the path of Gandhiji needs to be followed for the country's overall development.

Jaising, who also runs Lawyers Collective and is co-founder of news and

practitioners, Dr Parikh, who was joined on stage by Guest of Honour and former Additional Solicitor General Indira Jaising, said that though he agrees there was a sort of undeclared emergency, he has not given up hope. He called for a grassroots movement as the foundation of change and said democracy was strong in India because of its multi-layered diversity. He called for strengthening diversity as the way to fight authoritarian rule.

According to him, what was happening was a temporary phase. "Since 2014, we have seen a change in the situation. The freedom struggle was for the creation of a plural society. However, constitutional values are now being

opinion portal, 'The Leaflet', dwelt on the issue of emergency and undeclared emergency, noted: "When the Emergency was imposed in 1975, the legitimacy of the Constitution was not denied. An elected executive declared the Emergency. However, what we are seeing now is an undeclared emergency." She also spoke on the learnings from the massive number of detentions in the NewsClick case, where more than 90 journalists have had their homes raided and devices seized.

Mumbai Press Club President Ayaz Memon welcomed the guests at the annual gathering of journalists. The



RedInk Awards: Winners of the Mumbai Press Club's RedInk Awards.

event sees hundreds of members of the profession come together once a year to celebrate good reporting and editing across print, electronic and digital formats.

Mumbai Press Club Chairperson Gurbir Singh, who is a member of the Press Council of India, lamented the recent speech of Vice President and Rajya Sabha Chairperson Jagdeep Dhankhar on the occasion of National Press Day on 16 November 2023, where instead of supporting a free and critical media, the Vice President instead called for a tight leash on news reporting. Gurbir Singh, on behalf of the Mumbai Press Club, underlined the need for an urgent ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where more than 60 local and international journalists had lost their lives in the line of duty.

The evening also witnessed a scintillating panel discussion on: 'NewsClick and After Fresh challenges for news media'. Eminent lawyer Aspi Chinoy, one of the participants, said, unfortunately things would get worse for journalists before they got better as the terms of laws such as UAPA

and PMLA allow indiscriminate arrests and few options for relief. He also criticized the double standards of the higher judiciary, who, he said, offered peans of support for freedom of the press when it involved TV anchor Arnab Goswami's liberty. On the other hand, the same judiciary has allowed the Kerala journalist Siddiqui Kappan to rot in jail for over two years for the 'crime' of going to Hathras, UP, to cover the gang rape and killing of a Dalit woman. Other speakers also condemned the misuse of central agencies to silence the media.

Senior journalist Jitendra Dixit pointed out that the mass raids and detentions of journalists in the NewsClick were orchestrated to send a strong message to the media not to take a critical stance against the government. Others who participated included former Mumbai Police Commissioner Sanjay Pandey and Kalpana Sharma, a senior columnist and author. The session was moderated by Naresh Fernandes, Editor of Scroll.in.

The coveted RedInk Awards for Lifetime Achievement was bestowed

on senior journalist and author Neerja Chowdhury for her long and distinguished coverage of politics and governance.

The Journalist of the Year Award this year was shared by Dhanya Rajendran, Editor-in-chief of The News Minute, for her series on voter fraud, and independent journalist Sharad Vyas for his exposes on the Pegasus case. As many as 31 journalists were feted at the Grand finale with RedInk trophies and a cheque of Rs one lakh awarded in various categories of print, digital and video reporting.

The RedInk Awards for Excellence in Journalism were set up 12 years ago to encourage good quality reporting and analysis, fair play, and high ethical standards in Indian journalism. It stands as a reminder of the larger purpose of journalism.

The title partner for RedInk Awards 2023 is Zee Entertainment Enterprises (ZEEL). Our Associate partners include Indiabulls Housing, Aditya Birla Group, L&T Finance, Finolex Industries, Adfactors PR, Concept Communication and Pernod Ricard.

Understanding Mental Health from an Islamic Psychological Perspective

By: Sayema Zulfeqar

Over the past few years, there has been growing awareness of the significance of mental health within India. More and more teens and adults are now stepping out from the long-held stereotypes surrounding mental health and are seeking professional help. According to a 2018 follow-up study by the **LiveLoveLaugh Foundation** in 2021, the general perception of Indians towards mental health and individuals suffering from mental illnesses has improved. The study also found a significant increase in the number of people willing to seek treatment for mental health illnesses, with 92% willing to do so, nearly double the 54% from 2018.

Although this is a great milestone, increased mental health awareness hasn't translated into a better understanding of mental health for Muslims across India, especially in the light of Islam. Unfortunately, many Muslims continue to view mental health issues as a "first-world problem" and some attribute them to a sign of a low faith (Imaan), demonic possessions, or evil eye. Undoubtedly, as Muslims, we acknowledge the reality of these in our lives, however, the Islamic understanding of mental health is very holistic and rich.



Does Islam recognise mental illnesses?

Long before modern psychology evolved as an independent science in 1879 by William Wundt, the Prophet (ﷺ) recognised the impact of mental illnesses when he was reported to have said, "The pen is lifted from three people: a sleeping person until he awakens, a child until he becomes an adult, and an insane person until he regains his sanity."

Evidently, the hadith recorded in Tirmidhi (1423), views insanity as a disease and stands as a testimony to Islam's empathetic approach to mental health such that those who have been deemed as mentally deranged are excused from performing acts of worship like the five daily prayers, fasting, Hajj, etc. Thus, mental well-being in Islamic traditions is a prerequisite for fulfilling our religious obligations to the Creator and social obligations to the creation.

Furthermore, Islam places great emphasis on the preservation of our physical and mental health. All divine commandments have been legislated by Allah for the welfare of human beings in this life and the next. It is for this reason that intoxicants, like alcohol, have been strongly prohibited since they impair our cognitive functioning and cause significant distress to our health, relationships, and spirituality.

It was narrated from 'Abdullah bin 'Umar that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said: "Every intoxicant is unlawful and whatever causes intoxication in large amounts, a small amount of it is (also) unlawful." [Ibn Majah, 3392].

A devout Muslim can experience anxiety, depression, or any other mental illness, just as any physical illness like cancer or thyroid. According to the **World Health Organisation**, 1 in 4 people suffer from a mental illness at some point in their lives. Suffering from a mental illness isn't a choice and a believer can be tested through it.

"And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and a loss of wealth and lives and fruits, but give good tidings to the patient." (Quran, 2:155)



A holistic approach to healing:

Both the Quran and Sunnah have not only laid foundations for understanding mental health, but go a step further by encouraging us to seek treatment, whether it's through practising coping skills like reflective journaling, taking medication, therapy, or a combination of all.

The Prophet (ﷺ) said, "Every disease has a cure. If a cure is applied to the disease, it is relieved by the permission of Allah Almighty." [Sahih Muslim, 2204].

Carrying on the legacy of the Prophet (ﷺ), our Muslim predecessors in the glorious days of the past experimented with different therapeutic practices and psychiatric treatments for mental illnesses. While the rest of the world was confining the mentally challenged in dark dungeons since these societies thought of mental illnesses as supernatural states, Muslim philosophers, theologians, and physicians were defining and treating

psychological disorders in hospitals as early as 750 CE.

Abu Zayd al-Balkhi, a ninth-century Muslim polymath, was the first to differentiate between neurotic and psychotic disorders in his treatise, **Sustenance of the Soul**. Likewise, Abu Bakr al-Razi, another ninth-century Muslim physician and polymath, also known as Rhazes, headed the world's first psychiatric ward in Baghdad where the patients were treated through herbal medicines, diets, music therapy and aromatherapy,

What changed then?

Much of Islam's intellectual heritage has been unfortunately lost today with time. As a result, our attitude, as Muslims, towards mental health has dramatically changed. I believe there are many reasons for this, but colonialism and the separation of religion from science may have played a role. In the Euro-centric Western world's efforts to formalize psychology as an "empirical" science since the 19th century,

psychology, once defined as the study of the "soul", gradually adopted a reductionist secular paradigm that quantifies human cognitions, explains observable behaviour, and no longer acknowledges the existence of our soul and the Divine in our lives. Consecutively, this may have shaped the way perhaps our grandparents and parents viewed mental health and led to the birth of taboos surrounding mental health, especially among Muslims.

However, the revival of the Islamic psychology movement through Dr. Malik Badri's groundbreaking publication, *The Lizard's Hole* (1975), shows a growing interest in revisiting and studying the superabundant Islamic psychological literature from the past.

Although we still have a long way to go in addressing cultural stereotypes and ensuring Islamically integrated mental health support for Muslims worldwide, I'm optimistic that we're already taking small steps to crafting a new legacy.

Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan's translation offering readers a deeper understanding

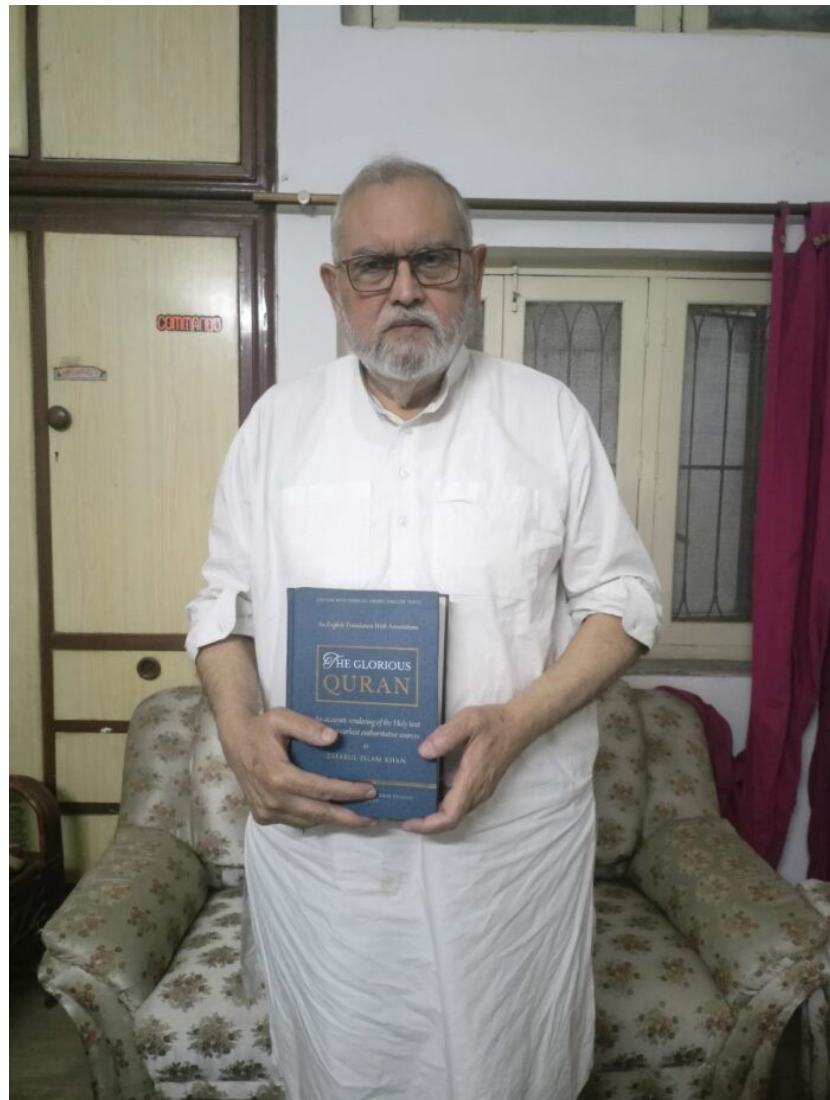
By: Hasan Zia Rizvi/

Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan, a 75-year-old Indian scholar, has published a new translation of the Quran, the holy book of the Muslims. It is the first significant contribution to the English translation of the Quran by an Indian scholar since the popular 1930s translation by Indian barrister Abdullah Yusuf Ali, which has long held sway in Indian households.

Dr. Khan studied at Al-Azhar and Cairo universities, received his PhD in Islamic Studies from Manchester University, and has written over 50 books on various topics in Arabic, English, and Urdu. He embarked on a journey to provide a more accurate rendering

of the Holy Quran based on the earliest authoritative resources. His groundbreaking work seeks to rectify inaccuracies and nuances often overlooked in the translation process.

The linguistic nuances of Quranic Arabic, which differ from Arabic



spoken and written in the Arab world, presented a unique challenge, according to Dr. Khan, who dedicated eleven years to meticulously revising and transforming Abdullah Yusuf Ali's translation.

Dr. Khan's goal was not just to rectify inaccuracies, but also to

address outdated language and poetic elements present in Ali's translation. The end product is an entirely new translation, supplemented with over two thousand new comments and extensive appendices covering numerous aspects of the Quran.

Dr. Khan's translation includes a chapter illustrating the differences between Biblical and Quranic narratives. This chapter dives into over fifty characters and events found in the scriptures, highlighting variances and important additions. According to Dr. Khan, while the Quran and the Bible share a common source, the Quran has remained

unaltered over the millennia, preserving its pristine form and linguistic essence.

Another distinguishing feature of the book is a note in the introduction that highlights scientific indications found in the Quran. The author presents a

succinct description of fascinating scientific findings, such as the Quran's mention of particles smaller than an atom, the anticipation of future discoveries, and the fascinating phenomena of two streams of water not mixing.

Two Circles spoke to Dr. Khan about his new English translation of the Quran.

Can you provide examples of verses that may have different interpretations and how your translation addresses these nuances?

Certainly. One example is the verses regarding the concept of "killing the Kafirs," which has been widely misunderstood globally. In my translation, I have provided annotations to offer both meanings accepted by different sections of readers.

In Surah 9, verse 5, the Quran states: "But once the Sacred Months have passed, kill the polytheists—those who violated their treaties—wherever you find them, capture them, besiege them, and lie in wait for them in every way. But if they repent, perform prayers, and pay alms-tax, then set them free. Indeed, Allah is All-Forgiving, Most Merciful."

It's crucial to note that in this verse, the term "polytheists" specifically refers to those individuals in Arabia, particularly in the proximity of Mecca and Medina, who had previously entered into a treaty with the Muslims. The directive is contextualized to address the circumstances of that specific time and region, emphasizing the importance of understanding the historical and cultural context to interpret the Quran accurately.

What were the major challenges you encountered

during the translation process and how did you overcome them?

The translation process posed several challenges, and to overcome them, I sought advice from 70 Islamic scholars, Arabic professors, and linguistic experts. By incorporating their suggestions, I aimed for accuracy. One significant challenge was ensuring clarity for ordinary Muslim and non-Muslim readers, considering the absence of this approach in many existing translations. It was crucial to prevent misunderstandings that could be exploited by enemies of Islam.

I strongly advocate for the unity of Muslims under the banner of one Quran, rejecting the divisive nature of sectarianism within Islam. Throughout my work, I have confronted the challenge posed by varying interpretations across different sects in Islam with an unwavering commitment to unbiased and honest representation. In instances where conflicting interpretations arise in certain verses, I have taken a transparent approach, presenting both versions without imposing a definitive judgment on correctness. Instead, I guide readers toward the most authentic and accurate understanding, urging for acknowledgment and acceptance by every Muslim.

For readers engaging with your translation, what advice or guidance would you offer to enhance their understanding and appreciation of the Quran?

My advice to readers is to focus on authentic translations and avoid unauthentic interpretations. The copious annotations in my book are designed to clarify various authentic interpretations related to each verse. By engaging with these annotations,

readers can gain a more nuanced and accurate understanding of the Quranic text.

The addition of comparative narratives of the Quran and the Bible, and scientific indications adds an extra layer of depth to the reader's exploration of the Quran, inviting them to contemplate the intersection of science and spirituality within its verses.

Are there any future projects or works related to Quranic translation or Islamic scholarship that you are currently undertaking or planning?

Currently, I am working on the indexing of the Quran, which I hope to publish soon. This project aims to provide readers with a valuable tool for navigating the Quranic text, enhancing their overall experience and comprehension.

(Quran indexing is a way to organize the Quran by grouping verses based on related topics, titles, and contents.)

Dr. Zafarul Islam Khan's translation stands as a testament to meticulous scholarship, offering readers a deeper understanding of the Quranic text and its unique position in the literary and spiritual landscape.

The translation is published by the Delhi-based Pharos Media, in two editions. The first edition is priced at INR 1195 or USD 49 and includes both the Arabic text and its English translation in parallel. Alternatively, the second edition is available for INR 795 or USD 39 and features the English translation without the parallel Arabic text. Orders can be placed through books@pharosmedia.com.

Courtesy: TwoCircles.net

Exploring Malaysia's Halal Food Mmarket

By: Nurul Suhaidi

In Malaysia, the prioritisation of halal food is not seen as a burden but a fundamental aspect ingrained in our society as part of our cultural and majority religious practice that reflects a commitment to Islamic principles.

With the halal food lifestyle and demand for diverse and authentic dining experiences continuing to rise, the significance of obtaining a halal certification for restaurants cannot be overstated.

Navigating the halal restaurant market access is not only about meeting religious dietary requirements but also unlocking opportunities for wider market penetration, especially in the lucrative domain of export markets.

According to Halal Development Bhd (HDC) CEO Hairol Ariffein Sahari, engaging in halal food activities and values are fundamentally religious, they are not merely symbolic.

“This is because adopting halal values and perspectives is increasingly recognised by governmental organisations around the world, as well as by industry players and consumers.

“The rise in global tourism also has contributed to the demand for halal restaurants. Muslim travellers, in particular, seek dining options that adhere to their dietary requirements, creating opportunities for halal restaurants in popular tourist destinations,” he told The Malaysian Reserve (TMR).

Food businesses that embrace halal certification are winning in the export market as it provides them with global market access catering to the growing

number of Muslim consumers worldwide.

The certification also will increase consumer confidence in the quality and authenticity of the food and products.

In addition, the halal certification adds to their competitive advantages as it allows Malaysian businesses to differentiate their products and services from competitors while making it easier for Malaysian food and beverage (F&B) businesses to navigate international trade agreements and regulations.

“Halal certification also enhances the credibility of F&B entrepreneurs and their products. It serves as a third-party verification of compliance with Islamic standards, building trust among consumers, retailers and business partners,” Hairol said in an interview with TMR.

Market Value

It is noted that the global Muslim population is growing, creating a larger consumer base for halal products. Estimates indicate that in 2030, global Muslim expenditure on the halal sector is projected to be worth US\$3.5 trillion (RM16.34 trillion).

For the year 2022, Malaysia's halal export for F&B was RM27.84 billion, an increase of 57.8% from 2021. This increase was due to the economic rebound and the overall trade improvement post-Covid-19.

Additionally, according to HDC, the global halal food market is quite promising as the market is forecasted to reach US\$2.17 trillion by 2030.

Malaysia has very well-established halal standards that counter all sectors of food industries and the nation's halal certification is recognised by the Department of Islamic Development Malaysia (Jakim) which is accepted globally, trusted and reliable.

Malaysia's halal regulation also cannot be simply regulated by any organisation including the provider of halal training.

SIRIM Bhd is one of the technical committees in developing halal standards such as MS 1500, MS 2400, MS 2934, MS 2424, MS 2610, and MS 1900, and businesses may seek training, halal consultancy and explore deeper understanding and significance of having their business halal certified through those bodies.

In overseeing the halal training and consultancy, SIRIM halal department senior consultant Lizawati Mohamad Darwi said the demand for halal food is currently expanding worldwide, and in Malaysia, this is seen as a prerequisite for developing a business system and a foundation of the other system.

According to her, halal certification can streamline other restaurant business processes as it indirectly complements food safety standards such as Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) and ISO which are required for food safety and security.

Not only that, given that the concept of halal emphasises not only halal sources but also in terms of hygiene in food production, most companies

choose to integrate halal standards with other food standards that emphasise food safety and hygiene.

“For SIRIM, we can see the demand among food industries is increasing by the demand for training and consultancy service we received,” she said.

The increased demand is also due to the acceptance of Muslims only for halal-certified products to prevent “shubhah” or doubt resulting in them purchasing food with a clear halal logo on the label.

“Not only that, non-Muslims started to accept halal (status) due to the belief that halal also provides health benefits by consumption of good sources of food and well-ethical animal slaughtering or practices,” she said.

Product and Business Expansion Opportunity

Halal certification is important to build trust and confidence among consumers, leading to increased sales and brand loyalty. It is also a prerequisite for accessing Muslim-majority markets, which is impartial for exports.

Muslim-majority markets constitute a substantial portion of the global population and halal certification is a good starting point to enter the market, enabling more opportunity to expand product and business potentials.

The impact of gaining halal market access is also significant on the overall halal supply chain and ecosystem which assures that halal products are preserved from contamination hence influencing various stakeholders.

On top of that, the strategies to streamline the certification process benefit not only individual businesses but contribute to the overall efficiency and growth of the halal industry and are important to maintain the integrity

of halal until it reaches consumers.

Global Halal Market Challenges

While halal certification plays a crucial role in expanding international market access, food businesses face challenges to meet the global halal standards especially due to the diverse certification standards across countries.

Different countries and regions may have their halal certification standards, including labelling, alcohol, emulsifiers and other food contents which lead to a lack of uniformity and difficulties to enter the export market.

“Businesses face the challenge of navigating and adhering to diverse requirements, making it complex and time-consuming to obtain certifications for multiple markets,” Hairol said.

Due to this, he added that the Malaysian government is currently promoting the principle of halal diplomacy to promote and ease the integration of international halal certification acceptance.

Additionally, the challenge is also in ensuring the entire supply chain complies with halal standards, especially for businesses operating in multiple regions.

“Maintaining consistency from raw material sourcing to production and distribution is crucial for obtaining and retaining halal certification,” he said.

Meeting halal standards also often requires thorough documentation and traceability throughout the production process. Maintaining accurate records can be a challenge and businesses must implement robust systems to track the source and handling of ingredients.

Apart from that, obtaining and maintaining halal certification can

involve significant costs, including fees for inspections, audits and ongoing compliance. Whereas for small and medium enterprises (SMEs), the financial burden may be a barrier to entry into certain markets.

“To declare the product is halal, raw materials need to come from halal sources. Certain materials especially imported materials are more difficult to get the halal assurance,” Lizawati added.

Apart from raw materials, manpower issues and resources as well as the business process also pose challenges in maintaining the halal status for those who have obtained it, especially for the smaller food businesses.

Based on the regulations, the company is required to have at least two local Muslim workers in the production and operation. The high turnover among local workers often causes difficulties in complying with the requirements.

“To maintain minimum local workers sometimes is quite difficult, especially for small businesses. They tend to like switching jobs for better options. In that sense, it's difficult for the company to maintain the local Muslim workers.

“Another challenge will be the auditing by Jakim where the department will conduct spot checks on the business to ensure they can maintain two Muslim workers in the production. Otherwise, it will affect their certifications,” Lizawati added.

Nonetheless, she said businesses need to be aware of the challenges, and requirements, and seek advice from relevant bodies to increase awareness to develop their product to ensure success and eventually contribute to expanding the halal market.

This article first appeared in The Malaysian Reserve

Our American democracy is on trial

The jury in that trial is we, the people.
Our verdict will determine
democracy's future.



Frank F. Islam

Over the past year, much of the political news has been dominated by stories about Donald Trump's four indictments, the 91 counts against him, and the trials they've precipitated.

These trials will have direct consequences for the former president. They will have significant and indirect consequences for our American democracy as well.

There is a myriad of other factors that are putting our democracy on trial during these perilous times. The three major ones we discuss in this blog are: Congressional Chaos; Convoluted Politics; and a Country Divided.

Congressional Chaos

The 112th Congress which was in office from January 3, 2011, to January 3, 2013, may have been the worst Congress in history.

That's hard to determine objectively. It is easy to determine, however, that the 112th Congress was the least productive Congress ever.

Those were the opening lines of a Chapter titled "Congressional Dysfunction: Beltway Blues" in our book Working the Pivot Points: To Make America Work Again, published in 2013.

Fast forward one decade to the 118th Congress which has been in office

since January 3, 2023 and will exit office on January 3, 2025. It appears that, due to the performance of the Republican majority in the House of Representatives, this current Congress is positioned to be named both the worst and least productive Congress in history.

In terms of productivity, the 112th Congress passed a total of 220 laws. To date, at about its midpoint, according to Legiscan, the 118th Congress has passed a total of 18 laws with 11 coming from the House. At this rate, the 118th Congress might pass as few as 40 laws during its time in office.

It's not the lack of productivity, however, that would win the 118th Congress the award for being the worst Congress ever. It is the virtually total disarray shown by the Republicans as the majority party in the House of Representatives.

That disarray:

- Began in January of this year with the 15 ballots required to give the speakership to Kevin McCarthy (R-Ca)
- Extended for months thereafter, with the minority who blocked his speakership speaking out and exercising control in the positions of power and influence McCarthy gave them to gain the



- speakership.
- Moved to McCarthy's unprecedented ouster as Speaker on October 3 orchestrated by Matt Gaetz (R-FL) and 7 of his extreme right Republican associates.
- Continued for three weeks with no speaker as candidates such as Steve Scalise (R-La), Jim Jordan (R-Oh), and Tom Emmer (R-Mn) not passing muster and getting the necessary votes to become speaker.
- Culminated on October 25th with the election of the relatively unknown Mike Johnson (R-LA) as the speaker.

Many pundits have referred to the period from January 3 to October 25 as a time of congressional chaos. For a brief moment, there was hope that the chaos might be coming to a close.

That hope began to disappear after more was learned about Speaker Johnson, an evangelical Christian, a staunch MAGA Trump-supporting lawyer who helped organize and lead the election denial efforts against the

results of the 2020 elections, an anti-abortion activist, and an opponent of the LGBTQ community and same sex marriage.

The hope further disappeared when, early on October 27, Johnson proclaimed, after the shooting and killing of 18 in Maine, that the problem in mass shootings was not guns or access to them but "the human heart." And after the House passed a \$14.3 billion bill for aid to Israel to be offset by reducing funding for the Internal Revenue Service, which was the first piece of legislation passed under Johnson's leadership, the hope for an end to congressional chaos disappeared altogether.

That concern abated somewhat when Johnson proposed a two-part "laddered" approach to avoid a government shutdown on November 17 by funding agencies such as Transportation and HUD until January 19, and agencies such as the Departments of State and Defense until February 2.

The bill was passed in the House with

a total of 336 votes: 209 Democrats and 127 Republicans. 93 Republicans voted against the bill. This split within the Republican Party is indicative that there could be a cataclysm in the future.

Convoluted Politics

How has the situation in the House and the Republican Party grown so bad, with collegiality, civility, and compromise being seen as dirty words? This is the case because in this 21st century the Republican Party, which was once the party of presidents Lincoln, Eisenhower, and Reagan, is no longer the same party.

Thomas Mann and Norm Ornstein focused an early bright spotlight on the party's downward trajectory in their 2012 book, It's Even Worse Than It Looks: How the American Constitutional System Collided with the Politics of Extremism, in which they assert:

"Today's Republican Party ... is an insurgent outlier. It

has become ideologically extreme; contemptuous of the inherited social and economic policy regime; scornful of compromise; unpersuaded by conventional understanding of facts, evidence, and science; and dismissive of the legitimacy of its political opposition, all but declaring war on the government.”

That was Mann and Orenstein’s harsh assessment more than a decade ago. In the past ten years, the Republican Party, which was once a bastion of conservative values and fiscal responsibility, no longer exists. That is why, in March of 2021, we published a blog titled “RIP GOP. Hello POT.”

POT stands for Party of Trump. We first called the Republican Party the Party of Trump in 2017, shortly after Trump was elected president. We reiterated that label in 2020, shortly before the national election in that year because of the obvious stranglehold he had on the Republican Party.

As we noted in our 2021 blog, the tragic storming of the Capitol on January 6, inspired by Trump, did nothing to reduce that stranglehold. Nor has any of the unsavory things he has said or done since.

Jeremy Peters, reporter for the New York Times and a MSNBC contributor, authored a book, *Insurgency: How Republicans Lost Their Party and Got Everything They Ever Wanted*, which details how Trump appealed to and mobilized the religious right, social conservatives, and others, such as gun rights activists, to wrest control of the Party from its traditional leadership. When Peters’ book was released in February 2022, both the Brennan Center for Justice at the NYU School of Law and Terry Gross of NPR’s *Fresh Air* used the Party of Trump in

their headlines for their sessions for discussing that book with Peters.

In summary, the Republican Party is a misnomer. We believe the Party of Trump is a more appropriate and precise term — but it doesn’t tell the whole story.

A Country Divided

That story is that Donald Trump has been able to take the divides in this country and turn them to his political advantage. He did not create those divides, but he has managed to exploit, widen, and deepen them by creating his cult of MAGA followers.

A cult, as we defined it in earlier blogs, is a group of people with extreme dedication to a certain leader and set of beliefs. The important elements of that definition are a “certain leader” and “a set of beliefs.” In this instance, Trump is that certain leader, embodying, magnifying, and legitimating a set of beliefs.

Some of those beliefs are the beliefs of the members. The others are those of Trump himself. There is a reciprocity in this relationship that’s mutually beneficial to the cult specifically, and harmful to society in general. In a phrase, this is a cult of personality and aligned personalities.

Divides in our country are nothing new. They date back to this country’s founding, flow through the Civil War, and continue until today.

As we observed in our 4th of July blog this year, however:

Sadly, in 2023, this nation is more divided than it is united.

This division is not a recent occurrence, but it has intensified over the past several years. As we wrote in blogs published in 2022, we are becoming “The Island States of America.”

In those Island States, states’ rights dominate and the country is becoming increasingly balkanized.

The U.S. Constitution provided the basis for the elevation and supremacy of states’ rights. The Trump administration took advantage of this in order to reverse-engineer the nation. After his defeat in 2020, Trump’s persistent insistence that the election was stolen and perpetuation of the Big Lie has caused his supporters and leaders at the state level to take actions to continue to widen the divide.

It’s not just the divide between red states and blue that matters. The divide that will be determinative for the future of our democracy is the “state of mind” of many Americans today. This state of mind, regarding how they define democracy and how well it is working, is greatly affected by which political party one belongs to, where one lives, and whether their party is in charge.

It also results in partisan hostility, borne out of what academics have labeled “affective polarization.” Affective polarization is when peoples’ feeling or attitudes toward those in their own party or group grow more positive, and the feelings or attitudes towards those in the other party or group become more negative.

An August 2022 study by the Pew Research Center “found that majorities of both parties viewed the opposition as immoral, dishonest, close-minded, and unintelligent — judgements that grew even more adverse, by 13 to 28 points from 2016 to 2022.”

“Affective polarization” is not just

feelings and attitudes about those in the opposite party, but those in other groups such as those of a different race, religion, or gender. For many Americans, those feelings and attitudes are “hardened beliefs.”

Those beliefs are core values, attitudes, and opinions developed early in life. They are immutable and become the basis for what is referred to as “identity politics,” through which people’s perceptions regarding those different than themselves shape their political and personal agendas and actions. (For more detail and insights on “affective polarization” and “identity politics” refer to our 4th of July blog and an excellent article by Thomas Edsall of the New York Times.)

Problems for Our Democracy

These are perilous times for our American democracy, with serious threats to its future. We and others have written extensively about this since the emergence of the Tea Party movement in 2009. During that period, the threats have increased and democracy’s future has been put more at risk.

Three books released this year that address the current dire condition of our democracy from different perspectives are: Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt’s *Tyranny of the Minority: Why American Democracy Reached the Breaking Point*; Heather Cox Richardson’s *Democracy Awakening: Notes on the State of America*; and Adam Kinzinger’s *Renegade: Defending Democracy and Liberty in Our Divided Country*.

Levitsky and Ziblatt are professors of government at Harvard University, and the authors of the best-selling *How Democracies Die*, published in January of 2018. In their new book, they note that in 2016 the United States was on the “brink of a multi-racial

democracy...” but that “...America experienced an authoritarian backlash so bad that it shook the foundations of the republic.”

They go on to state that “...the assault on American democracy was worse than anything we anticipated when we were writing our first book...” They further observe, “Nor did we ever imagine that one of America’s two major parties would turn away from democracy in the twenty-first century.”

Based upon their analysis, Levitsky and Ziblatt conclude, “Part of the problem we face today lies in something many venerate: our Constitution... But flaws in our Constitution now imperil our democracy.” They explain:

Designed in a pre-democratic era, the U.S. Constitution allows partisan minorities to routinely thwart majorities, and sometimes even govern them. Institutions that empower partisan minorities can become instruments of minority rule. And they are especially dangerous when they are in the hands of extremist or anti-democratic partisan minorities.

Heather Cox Richardson, a professor of history at Boston College, and author of the best-selling *Substack* newsletter, *Letters from an American*, doesn’t trace the roots of democracy’s problem back to the U.S. Constitution. But she does take it back for seventy years to the conservative control of the Republican Party.

In his review of *Democracy Awakening* for *The Guardian*, Charles Kaiser notes:

Since the 1950’s, Richardson writes, conservatives have fought to destroy “the active

government of the liberal consensus, and since the 1980’s Republican politicians [have] hacked away at it” but still “left much of the government intact.” With Trump’s election in 2016, the nation had finally “put into office a president who would use his office to destroy it.” Republicans fought for 50 years for an “end to business regulation and social services and the taxes they required.” Trump went even further by “making the leap from oligarchy to authoritarianism.”

Former U.S. Representative Adam Kinzinger (R-IL) who, along with Liz Cheney (R-WY), was one of the two Republican on the House’ January 6th Select Committee, tells his life story in *Renegade*, and concentrates on democracy’s current and potential future problems in his commentary in the book.

In the Introduction, Kinzinger writes:

We have just survived the most threatening attack on our democracy since the Civil War. This success, and today’s demonstration of the reality of the dysfunctional reality of a party that has become Donald Trump’s cult of personality, prove that we are stronger than many expected. It is not the crisis that matters, but how we respond. I am arguing for us to prepare for the next one, which without our vigilant opposition, could lead to the breakup of the country.

Protecting Our Democracy

There is much that needs to be done to strengthen our democracy over the long term. (For thoughts and recommendations on this, click here.) In the short term, though, the critical issue is what to do in the upcoming presidential and national election year of 2024 to protect our democracy by preventing the “next crisis.”

The potential for a “next crisis” was highlighted in the findings of a New York Times/Siena College “swing states” poll released in early November, and Washington Post reporting examining Donald Trump’s plans and priorities if he is the Republican nominee and wins the presidency.

The “swing states” poll focused on the six states of Arizona, Georgia, Michigan, Nevada, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin which could determine the results of the 2024 election showed that, if the presidential election contest was between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, Trump would win the first five states and Biden would only win the state of Wisconsin. This poll also showed that, in general, those people surveyed were more approving of Trump’s accomplishments and candidacy.

Donald Trump’s priorities and plans if he is re-elected appear to be based upon the 3 R’s. For Trump those R’s are not reading, ‘riting, and ‘rithmetic but Revenge, Retaliation and Retribution. On November 5, the Washington Post published an article by Isaac Arnsdorf, Josh Dawsey, and Devlin Barrett, which begins as follows:

Donald Trump and his allies have begun mapping out specific plans for using the federal government to punish critics and opponents should he win a second term, with the former

president naming individuals he wants to investigate or prosecute, and his associates drafting plans to potentially invoke the Insurrection Act on his first day in office to allow him to deploy the military against civil demonstrations.

The individuals on Trump’s hit list include former chief of staff John F. Kelly, former attorney general William P. Barr, and former Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman Mark A. Milley.

On November 8, the Washington Post published an analysis by Aaron Blake identifying the following five tactics the Trump administration would employ in a second term:

- 1. Use the Justice Department for political purposes
- 2. Purge the government and install loyalists
- 3. Consolidate power in the presidency
- 4. Pardon January 6 insurrectionists
- 5. Crack down on immigrants harder, with extraordinary tools

Add all of this up and 2024 could either be a tipping point or a pivot point year for democracy.

A “tipping point” as we defined it in our book, Working the Pivot Points: To Make America Work Again, is “a point in which a system is displaced from a state of stable equilibrium into a state of instability.” A “pivot point” is “an area that must be leveraged and addressed effectively in order to effectuate change and effectuate positive outcomes.”

If Trump runs again and wins, that would definitely make 2024 a tipping point year. If Biden runs again and wins, that would provide the opportunity to make 2024 a pivot

point year.

We had hoped Biden’s victory in 2020 would have provided a pivot point. But because of the Trump’s refusal to accept the election results, his re-election candidacy and continuous campaigning, and other factors, such as those identified at the beginning of this blog, that pivot did not occur.

Given this, in 2024 democracy will be on trial. Its future will be in the hands of and determined by the electorate. Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt in their book assert, “Our Institutions will not save our democracy. We will have to save it ourselves.”

In his powerful concluding statement as a member of the January 6th Select Committee, Adam Kinzinger expressed a similar sentiment proclaiming:

The militant, intolerant ideologies, the militias, the alienation and disaffection, the weird fantasies, and disinformation, they’re still all out there and ready to go. But if January 6th has reminded us of anything, I pray it reminded us: laws are just words on paper.

They mean nothing without public servants dedicated to the rule of law and who are held accountable by a public that believes oaths matter — oaths matter more than party tribalism or the cheap thrill of scoring political points. We the people must demand more of our politicians and ourselves. Oaths matter.

The future of our American democracy is in our hands as twenty-first century citizens. As good citizens we have both the rights and the responsibilities to ensure that democracy is protected and strengthened so that it can survive through the 21st century and continue to make progress toward becoming the more perfect union envisioned by our founders.

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