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The Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library: Proposal for research and development of the World Tablighi Jamaat Congregation

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Abstract: Bishwa Ijtema, the World Congregation of Islamic Movement held every year in the winter in Bangladesh since 1947. This second largest Muslims’ congregation after the holy Hajj of Mecca sits yearly for a three day in the bank of the river ‘Turag’ near Tangi of Dhaka. The congregation takes place at an area comprising 160 acres (0.65 km²) of land (0.25 square mile). The event focuses on prayers and meditation organized as annual meeting of the Global Tablighi Jamaat. The program concludes with the Akheri Munajat (final prayer as the earnest requests to the almighty Allah) of the devotees of Islam from 80 countries for the spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the world Muslim community. The Ijtema seeks divine blessings from the almighty Allah. This immensely popular program gives Bangladesh peoples an opportunity to interact with Muslims from home and abroad where people attend regardless of casts, creeds and riches. Similar programs are also held in a lesser scale in other countries that comes from 1927. Islamic boyans (Speeches and explanations from the holy Qur’an and Al-Hadiths—the verses from the prophet of Islam), before the Akheri Munajat, the Tongi Bishwa Ijtema gives directions as guide lines for the Muslims and the teachings of the great Islam that observed Islamic life styles. Peoples need documentary information for reference, literature and practicable information for managing their own and matching to global brotherhood, preaching of Islamic teachings, moral and movement of spirituals for peaceful safer life. The proposal for establishing the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library is for the interest and information of the large number of people who are already in Islam and interested in Islamic teachings and life styles in the age of knowledge and technologies. General devotees to Islamic scholars, people from all communities will also avail related information and literatures for their clear concept about the Islam. The proposed Library will be with an ‘open access’ during and off the Ijtema period. This library will have a collaborative linkage to Islamic libraries associated with foundations, societies, councils, mosques, madrasahs, schools, universities, interfaith institutions and so on. This paper discusses the issues.

Keywords: Muslim congregation, Akheri Munajat, Islamic Boyans, Bishwa Ijtema, Tablighi Jamaat, Reference Library, Information-Khadem.
The world second largest Muslims’ annual congregation—“Bishwa Ijtema” of International Tablighi Jamat takes place in the Winter in Bangladesh since 1947. Akheri Munajat (final prayer as the earnest requests to the almighty Allah), the concluding session of the three-day program ends in participant devotees’ prayer for their spiritual adulation, exaltation and welfare of the world Muslim community. The Islamic boyans (speeches and explanations from the holy Qur’an and al-Hadiths—the verses from the prophet of Islam) that delivered and translated (into Bengali, Urdu, Hindi, English, Arabic, local dialects and other languages for proper understanding, communication, and sharing among devotees) before the Akheri Munajat of the Bishwa Ijtema of the Turag of Tongi gives directions as guidelines for the Muslims and about the teachings of the great Islam that observed in Islamic life styles.

In 2010, a total of five millions along with seven thousand foreign delegate devotees took part in the Bishwa Ijtema that increased into 11.2 millions in 2011 an inclusive of 11 thousands of Muslim devotees from abroad. The Ijtema seeks divine blessings from the almighty Allah for the welfare of the Muslim Ummah. It may be mentioned that the world Muslims (1.65 of 6.82 billions/2010) among the total earth population is now facing image crisis regarding terrorism, extremism and some anti-Islamic activities in the name of Islam that create panic, tension and threats in the people of other faiths, practices and ideologies, whereas Islam is the life style of peace lovers supported by the complete code of life “Al-Qur’an” and the “Al-Hadiths” of Muhammad(sm), the prophet of Islam.
Muslim devotees offer prayers during the World Islamic Congregation on the banks of the river Turag in Tongi, on the outskirts of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Friday, Jan. 21, 2011. The three-day congregation began Friday.

This immensely popular program gives Bangladeshi Muslims an opportunity to interact with Muslims of the other parts of the world regardless of casts, creeds and riches who attend the congregation. Before that, the devotees from home and abroad work round the year and invite Muslims to attend and participate in the Bishwa Ijtema and the Akheri Munajat as well. It is alternatively considered as the “Hajj of the Poor” thy wish to perform and observe it in the Mecca of Saudi Arabia but can not effort. Every year a lot of Islamic works and activities take place during the Bishwa Ijtema but people can not get them as documented records in a library or reference center after the event in suitable location. They depend for this invaluable Islamic information only on oral representations from participants’ experience and memories. It may be mentioned that a huge number of women and children also take part the Bishwa Ijtema like the Hajj maintaining the norms of Islamic practices where every participant of the Ijtema receives equal treatment. Though the Ijtema program is only for Muslims, the people of other faiths can learn and share information and communication among them about the greatness of the Islam. By nature and practice, it is harmonious and tolerance based program for common human being. Its teachings can undoubtedly help the world humanity in many ways. The Muslims feel for a reference center or library with these for permanent information and reuse them as reference when and where need. In this capital biased age, there occurred a mass marriage ceremonial before the Akheri Munajat. With pre-consensus, numbers of adult couples come at the Bishwa Ijtema place for dowry free (dowry is a curse in social life as well as in Islam) marriage that are free of expenditure and financial burden less also. Most of couples are from financially very poor family. The Imam of the Bishwa Ijtema administers the mass marriage and declares them couples. He along with all devotees offers doa (special prayer) for new couples’ happy life. Every year this number is around 300 to 500. Miracle information and experienced is that no divorce (separation) is occurred among those couples.

1. Bishwa Ijtema Structure Building

1.1. Land acquisition and registration

Bangladesh, the host country of the Bishwa Ijtema will manage a suitable piece of land preferably the present location where the second largest world Muslims annual congregation takes place regularly. The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh will donate the piece of land by acquisition and by registration in favour of the Bishwa Ijtema authority. It will be of course free of cost or with a token price. The land will be used for multiple purposes that include income generating activities of the Ijtema devotees. With proper, justified and suitable designed plan, the Bishwa Ijtema authority for the Tablighi Jamat will apply to the appropriate level of the Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh to have the said piece of land permanently near the river “Turag” of Tongi of Dhaka. The land area may be comprised at total 160 acres (0.65 km²) of land (0.25 square mile) that is used for the Annual Bishwa Ijtema of the Tablighi Jamat Congregation since 1947.

1.2. Bishwa Ijtema Complex Premises construction

The Bishwa Ijtema Authority along with local district council will prepare an architectural design with consultation of world Muslim legends/leaders in architecture. Finally with the approval of the host country’s government, the construction body (namely the public works department) will go for site and land development and civil construction works of the said building along with premises. The construction body must keep in mind the glorious past and history of Muslim civilization and architectural values of ancient monuments of the golden age of Muslim history. The fund and construction budget for the
Bishwa Ijtema Complex Premises will be formed and developed from the wakf (tax and condition free gift in Islam) and contributory donations from various sources. The sources are:

(a) Local Administration/Municipality Authority (Gazipur District Council);
(b) Bishwa Ijtema Authority;
(c) The Tablighi Jamat International;
(d) Islamic Development Bank of OIC (Organization of Islamic Conference);
(e) ISESCO (Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organizations);
(f) Local donations from business and philanthropist groups;
(g) International donation from Muslim charity firms;
(h) Any donation from Islam and Muslim loving countries; and
(i) Any fund from the Religious Affairs Ministries home and abroad.

1.3. Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library building construction

The Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library structure will be an oval shaped spacious hall room or rooms with central character of the Bishwa Ijtema Complex Premises. The interior designs and fittings will be as world class that reflects the Islamic glory and golden past. The library will attracts the devotees and other readers in and use its treasure of information and knowledge especially of Islam and Islam related literatures. The inner arrangement of the library will be built in planned way so that minimum 2000 users can sit and use the in-house-library facilities at a time. The library house will be centrally air-conditioned that facilitates the readers to stay there for longer period. Sitting arrangement of the library users will be on floor carpeting/mats. Some cushion chair for children and aged people may be placed there in the library house. A library corner for female readers may also be created with congenial reading facilities. There will be also sitting arrangement for the library functionaries in the library house. The library functionaries will be provided some furniture to operate the daily library services and preparatory activities there. This reference library will be open to all and free access to its treasure of resources.

1.4. Library employment

Most of the employees of the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library will be volunteers from devotee participants. A group of learned people/ devotees will work on self motivation about the information services to mankind and of Muslim brotherhood. During their stay at the Ijtema, they will be given orientation training on library operation and its services.

The Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh may devote some surplus employees from its various departments and pay their salaries as regular workers of the republic. Moreover, some retired employees who are interested in can spend their leisure as volunteers of the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library.

Various Islamic and Muslim welfare organizations may give support by sending their volunteers to serve this library and the center of Islamic preaches in the name of Allah and His teachings as practiced by His Prophet and Caliphs of Islam.

The Islamic foundation of Bangladesh and the Masjid (Mosque) Mission can also deploy their workers in the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library on the basis of requisition from the library authority.

Individual volunteers from home and abroad who want to serve this institution may also work there in the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library.
Commonly, they will be entitled and known as “Information-Khadem” of Islamic Information Services. It is undoubtedly an honorable and noble job as well in Islam in the light of Qu’a’ranic verses ‘Read, In The Name Of Your Allah’ as to study or to facilitate to study.

The department of Information Science and Library Management of the universities of Bangladesh and the Library Association of Bangladesh may voluntarily extend their cooperation providing orientation training to those who are interested as “Information-Khadem” for Islamic Information Services. Any foreign organization can provide similar training for operating the proposed library management services efficiently. Any professional and technical cooperation from any corner of the world regarding the development of the library is also welcomed for the sake of its proper development, smooth running and services.

Besides, some employees must be appointed as “regular staff” in the library pattern. Their salaries and other service benefits will be given as per government rules of the host country. The Bishwa Ijtema authority will appoint them as per recommendation from the Library Management Committee. The Librarian will be one of the professionals among the permanent staffing. The total employees of the library (Salaried and volunteers) must be supervised and monitored by the librarian of the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library that set by the Library Management Committee in this regard.

1.5. Library collections building

The library collections will mainly be about Islam and of Islamic information, literature and knowledge. Carefully, the selection body (Library Management Committee) will go for collecting Islamic and Muslim literature and that of inter-faith and documentary authentic information. The information resources will be gathered by following recognized modes of developing library collections:

1.5.1. **Purchase and by deposit:** (a) Bishwa Ijtema authority, (b) Local bodies of administration and philanthropists, (c) Government through Islamic Foundation and the Mosjid (Mosque) Mission, (d) World Islamic Missions, and (e) Individual efforts.

1.5.2. **Donation/gifts:** (a) Islamic countries, (b) World Islamic and or Muslim Communities (c) Host or Local Government bodies, (d) Bishwa Ijtema participants and devotees, (e) The Tablighi Jamat International, and (f) World Islamic and Interfaith Research Groups.

1.5.3. **Own publications:** (a) Bishwa Ijtema publications, and (b) Tablighi Jamat (International and National) publications.

1.5.4. **Exchange programs:** Literature and informative publications exchange with others.

1.6. Library equipment

The library equipment will be need based that can be collected by purchase and or by receiving unconditional donations. It may be mentioned that the library will play the central role of training, practice and preach of Islam as decides by the Library Management Committee with consultation of Tablighi Jamat International and World Muslim Community.

### 1.6.1. Justifiable list of the equipment for proposed Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. #</th>
<th>Name of equipment</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Computer terminal feature- Kiosk</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Printer</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Scanner</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Fax 02
5. Multimedia projector 05
6. Overhead projector 05
7. VCD player 05
8. OHP 05
9. Audio-Video recorder 05
10. CCTV 20
11. Land phone 02
12. Plain paper copier 02
13. Internet collectivity (using points) 200
14. Binding machine 01
15. Cutting machine 01
16. Display Screen 10

1.7. Library furniture

The library furniture may also be need based and utility oriented that collected by purchase and by receiving without pre-conditioned donations.

1.7.1. List of suitable and justifiable furniture in the proposed library

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. #</th>
<th>Name of equipment</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Book shelves (10<em>5</em>1) CFT</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Book trolleys</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Ladders</td>
<td>05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Carpet/mat (Floor sitting in the library)</td>
<td>02 sets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Service chair</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Service table</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Cushion chairs for children and aged people</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Why the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library

Information need is for all and everywhere. The huge gathering of world Muslims obviously need of information flow and open access for ontime clearance and argumentum boyans of the Bishwa Ijtema. The boyans are essential for learning things and getting new ideas with clearance about the Islam, Islamic knowledge, teachings, Islamic thoughts and life styles. There must be a reference library with an open access facility for any kind of information and literature about Islam and related fields for crossed check and clearance. This library will mainly be of “Reference” natured. The objectives and importance of establishing the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library are as follows:

1. collect, preserve and disseminate right representation of Islamic knowledge and information among the devotees;
2. correct and authentic citations and explanations of Islamic information and boyans (speeches) during and after Ijtema;
3. right reference about Islamic knowledge, practices and life styles;
4. motivation on Islamic teachings and peaceful life and practices;
5. explanations and cross-checking about any reference and citation given in the boyans and or any time and place;
6. explore knowledge of Islamic ideology, ethics and principles;
7. knowledge to reduce racism, terrorism, reactive-fundamentalism in the name of Islam;
8. preaching of Islam and Muslim brotherhood feelings as a way of peaceful life-code and for social progress;
9. building a store house as sources of getting Islamic information and knowledge in the time of need;
10. highlighting the richest and glorious past of Islam and its values and civilization;
11. uphold the brotherhood in Islam and Islamic faith among the world Muslim communities with other followers in various faith and religions;
12. minimize and reduce the tensions about the Islam to peoples in other religions;
13. functioning as “Centre of Excellence” in the inter-faith culture and practices;
14. advance the Muslim communities in the light of right knowledge, practice and innovations;
15. Islamic research and development of the Muslim Ummah (community) and other faith and religions;
16. reunion place for the Islamic thinkers, leaders, workers and khadems;
17. holding dialogues among the civilizations comprising with the Islam and its practices;
18. waving the misconceptions about and misinterpretations of the Islam, the holy Qua’ran, the Al-Hadiths, Muslim philosophy and life-styles;
19. adopt modern technologies in Islamic practices and progression;
20. building international communication bridge and cooperation among the Islamic and non-Islamic organizations in exchanging information and teaching of/about Islam; and
21. cooperation among other Islamic and Muslim organizations in Islamic knowledge flows and exchange of views and interpretations on any issue.

3. Funding for developing the Bishwa Ijtem Reference Library

The gathering of money from various sources can develop fund for the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library. The resources may be in cash and kinds or materials. The fund created for proposed library will be used by a competent “Library Management Committee (LMC)” to make sure credibility, transparency and accountability.

The sources of funding for the proposed library are:
(1) contribution from the participants devotees (50 cents to 1 dollar/person);
(2) savings from the Bishwa Ijtema and the Tablighi Jamat participants’ registration fee;
(3) donations from the Islamic Welfare Organizations;
(4) charity gifts from the dowry free mass-marriage organized during the Bishwa Ijtema event;
(5) donations from the savings of the devotees of the Ijtema;
(6) governmental gifts as “project aid” through “annual development program (ADP)”;
(7) any personal donation;
(8) contributions from local business communities;
(9) donations from the governments of Islamic countries, International Muslims Organizations;
(10) OIC/IDB or ISESCO donations; and
(11) local government’s contributions.

4. Library management

The proposed library will be run and monitored under the care and supervision of a “Library Management Committee (LMC)”. Accordingly a thirteen (13) member LMC is proposed as:
(1) Ameer/President of the World Tablighi Jamat- Convener
(2) Librarian, Dhaka University- Member
(3) Librarian, Gazipur Agricultural University-Member
(4) Librarian, Kushtia Islamic University-Member
4.1. Terms of reference for the Library Management Committee

The Library Management Committee will work with the following terms and references:
(a) it will work voluntarily to the welfare of the Bishwa Ijtema and World Muslim Community;
(b) Committee will recommend a “Organogram” for the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library;
(c) It will decide the mode of library services;
(d) It will prepare a library budget;
(e) It will finalize the list of titles to be collected;
(f) It will ensure effective budgetary transparency and accountability in the library purchase;
(g) It will facilitate to balanced grow the library;
(h) It will suggest the Ijtema Authority for library staffing (organogram and employment);
(i) Committee can co-opt members, if feels;
(j) It will act as “Editorial Board” for Bishwa Ijtema publications;
(k) Committee will suggest for library environment and management enhancement;
(l) It will be responsible for its work to the Bishwa Ijtema Council and report them;
(m) Any other assignment by Bishwa Ijtema authority.

5. Others

5.1. General fittings

The library will also be facilitated and equipped with sufficient lightings, standby generators, emergency lightings, and fans. These facilities must be available for during and off time of the Bishwa Ijtema gathering. Proper maintenance must be ensured with technical and financial supports. This task can be done by outsourcing manner also.

6. Implementation and monitoring

There will be an authority responsible for smooth implementation of establishing the proposed library as per approved designed and budgetary provision within. It will also monitor the progress and evaluate the performance of works and services on behalf of the International Tablighi Jamat with accountability and transparency. An Implementation and Monitoring Committee (IMC) is proposed that will decide the terms and references in the first meeting for its doings. The IMC may be as:
(1) Ameer/President of the World Tablighi Jamat- Convener
(2) Representative of Local District Council- Member
(3) Representative, Islamic Foundation Bangladesh-Member
(4) Representative of Local Municipality, Member
(5) Librarian, Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library- Member-Secretary.
7. Conclusion

Devotees and participants of the Bishwa Ijtema and fellows of the International Tablighi Jamat will avail the information facilities and services of the reference library for clear and authentic explanations and presentations. As open and free access reference library for Islamic information and reference, it can certainly help in preaching and spreading Islam with its right teachings and lessons by replicating in geometric matrixes i.e. one participant devotee will share and communicate the gained Islamic information and knowledge to ten people within his/her family and around then they disseminate and communicate the same to other ten each in their way of experience. Thus 1.65 millions of Muslims as well as devotees will spread the right Islamic information to their family members, neighbors, society members, countrymen and citizens of the globe. Thus the great Islam along with its peace, harmony and development messages will cover the world and contribute to minimize worldly mistrust, misconceptions and tensions among the states, nations, communities and philosophical ideologies as well as of interfaith. The Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library can play important role in establishing the world peace and safe the civilizations for the interest of mankind. It does cost nothing but has great values in consequences. It needs only good will, proactive intension with combined minimum cooperative and mutual efforts to build the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library. May be it will be a hard to find any individual among the Muslim Ummah who does oppose of establishing the Bishwa Ijtema Reference Library as Muslim world’s Information Center at the Bishwa Ijtema place in Bangladesh.

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