

Muslim New Year – 1st Muharram 1433AH (27th November 2011)

This Sunday 27th November 2011 on the Gregorian calendar is the equivalent to 1st Muharram on the Muslim calendar system. Hence 27th November 2011AD is direct equivalent to Muslims' 1st Muharram 1433AH. In many Muslim practising countries, 1st Muharram is also called Al-Hijra.

The comparative equivalent in date is not consistent each year since the Gregorian calendar is solar-based on a cycle of 365 days and the Muslim calendar is lunar-based. The variation is 11-12 days considering the different planetary cycles' measures and of course the periodic leap year.

Muslim calendaring system commenced as 1st Muharram in year 622AD when Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) relocated his closest followers from Mecca to Medina and set up the first Islamic state.

The two Eids (Eid-ul-Fitr and Eid-ul-Adzah) are high-key events, which are marked with significant historical backgrounds, respectively, such as fasting throughout the month of Ramadan and performance of pilgrimage (Hajj) to Mecca, which coincides with two other historical events: when Prophet Abraham relocated his 2nd wife (Hajra or Hagar) with her infant baby and his first child Ishmael to Arabia; and later when Prophet Abraham was inspired in a dream to sacrifice his first and only child - who was then 12-yers old. Of course he was stopped and Divinely ordered not to sacrifice his son but substitute with the best fattened lamb in the paddock close by.

1st Muharram however, is a Muslim low-key event and does not involve people taking to the streets and partying, in celebrating the new year as is common with 1st January. On the contrary, Muslims generally get together and have a discourse on the event of 1st Muharram or Al-Hijra. However, it is an important event to look back at the previous 12 months and proactively plan towards becoming improved persons for the next 12 months and that pattern becomes a continuum for Muslims.

Muslims note that date as the anniversary and also marvel and appreciate that Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) broke away from his own tribe in spearhead-driving the spread of Islam as a religion; and the recognition of One God as the Supreme Power, Who created everything from nothingness. In this regard Prophet Muhammad preached that God Almighty created the earth and rest of the universe in six periods of His time from nothingness. God's word is His power and He only says "Be" and it is – just as He required: *Qur'an 2:117 "Wonderful Originator of the heavens and the earth! And when He decrees an affair, He says to it only, Be, and it is."*

1st Muharram is also significant as another anniversary, when the people of Medina took a quantum leap in conversion to Islam, from their past practices of all forms of idolatry.

It is also important to note that all forms of fighting and quarrelling are prohibited in the month of Muharram. Muharram is expanded version of the root word "haram" which means prohibited. Some Muslims fast during this period but it is not as compulsive as in Ramadan. There are marginal variations in actual practice amongst mainstream Muslim groups.

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