

Integrating Naqli and Aqli

LEADER OF NEW KNOWLEDGE: The Islamic Science University of Malaysia is on its way to becoming a world leader in teaching Islamic Science and researching into it

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As higher education markets become increasingly competitive domestically and internationally, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM) is taking a unique approach — integrating Naqli (revealed knowledge) and Aqli (rational knowledge) to strengthen its reputation for research into Islamic Science.

For a start, in 2013, USIM secured the Niche Research Grant Scheme granted by the Education Ministry to conduct research into Prophet Muhammad's diet namely dates, goat's milk and *habattus sauda* (the black seeds from the *Nigella sativa* flower).

A milestone for the university, the work involves a multidisciplinary team from 51 academic areas, researching into prophetic foods for health.

The research aims at building a systematic database from the Quran, Sunnah (teachings and practices of Prophet Muhammad and interpretations of the Quran), Islamic and Malay manuscripts and scientific journals to collate the health values and food nutrition as well as analyse the foods consumed by the prophet.

Research Management Centre director Professor Dr Nor Aripin Shamaan said: "Dates and goat's milk are known for their health benefits. Dates were also a staple in every household for health reasons during the prophet's time."

He added: "Scientific research into dates shows that they help preserve health through the stimulants, useful in the treatment of respiratory disorders, heart conditions and anaemia, among others."

"Initial finding of the prophet's eating habits shows that he had his own style of consuming dates. He divided the date into two, threw away the seed before eating one half and giving the other to anyone near him. It will be interesting to know if there is a reason behind this habit."

The involvement of many researchers from different disciplines in the research into prophetic foods is one clear example of the inte-



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gration of Naqli and Aqli.

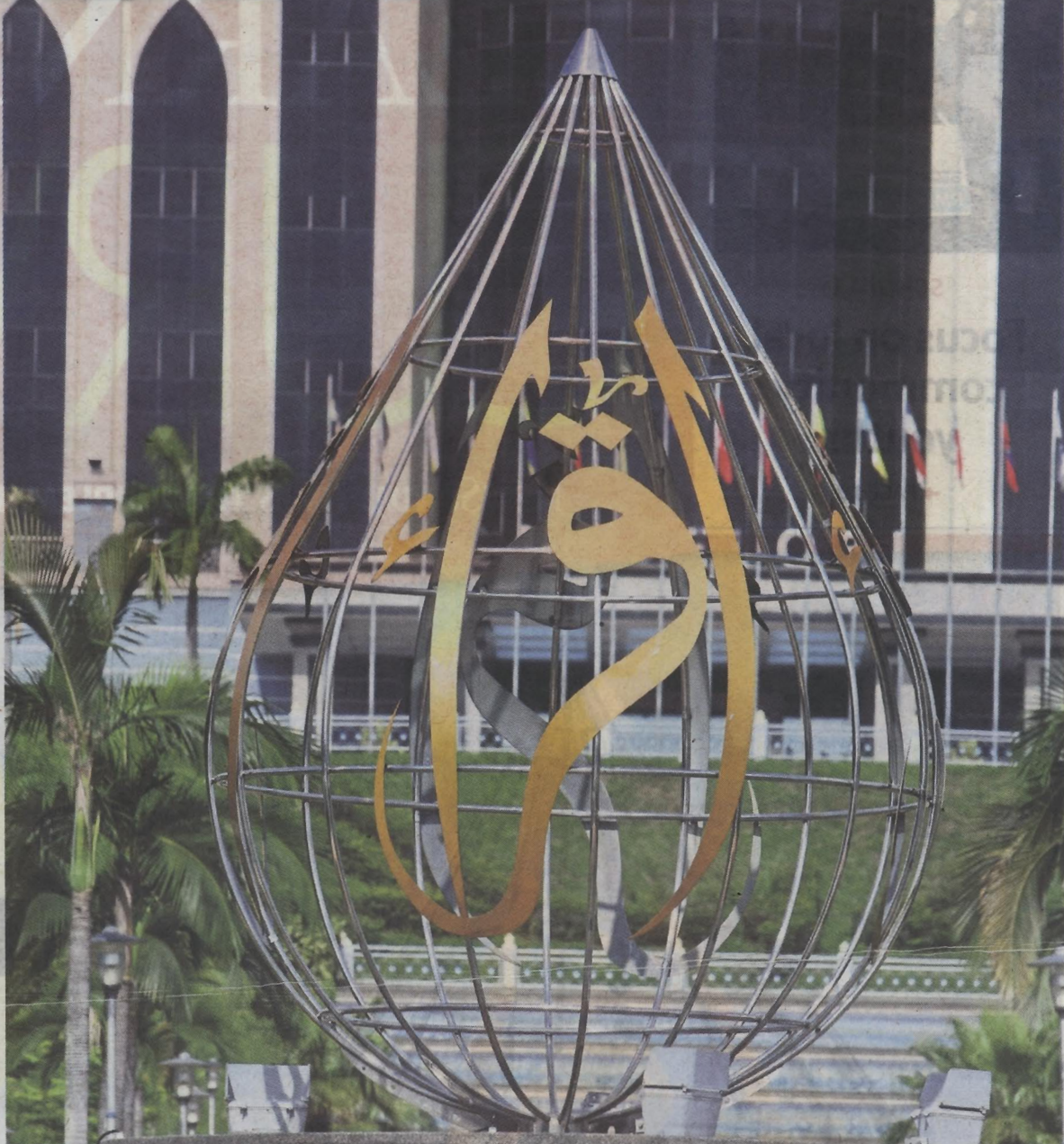
With scant scientific research into the effects of goat's milk taken with dates, favoured by Prophet Muhammad, there is much to explore.

EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

There are two kinds of knowledge in Islam. Revealed knowledge as in the Quran is given to human beings by Allah and transmitted through the prophetic tradition. Rational knowledge (such as mathematics and science) — acquired through human effort — comes from mankind.

Many Islamic universities were founded on Islamisation of knowledge through a synthesis of traditional (usually revealed knowledge) and modern disciplines. The two areas of study are taught alongside Islamic science as a subject, among others.

Islamic education is not limited to the study of the Quran as it is the foundation of all knowledge which guides the behaviour of the believing Muslim. Not to be confused with religious education, Islamic education integrates modern scientific knowledge into the Islamic worldview as early Muslims did during the first few centuries of Islam. For example, the methods of science in medicine, genetics and biology are integrated with the Quran and Sunnah. The Quran and Sunnah provide a rich resource of knowledge, solutions and ethics in the fields of science, medicine, economics and the humanities.



A water droplet-shaped sculpture with the word "Iqra" (read), part of the first verses of the Quran revealed to Prophet Muhammad. The sculpture greets visitors as they enter the compound at USIM. — COVER PICTURE BY AZIAH AZMEE



Nor Aripin Shamaan

USIM vice chancellor Professor Datuk Dr Musa Ahmad said: "Our target is that every USIM programme has at least 30 per cent of the Naqli and Aqli components. Herein lies the uniqueness of USIM education philosophy as it is the only institution so far in the world that adopts a balanced approach between the physical and spiritual aspects of everything that it does, not only in the academic programmes *per se*, but it is also widely practised throughout the university including at the administration and management levels.

"Our focus is to ensure that USIM becomes the reference centre, regionally by 2016 and globally by 2025, in the integration of Naqli and Aqli



Mohamad Nasrin Mohamad Nasir

knowledge. We are determined to be at the forefront in this effort."

Formerly known as Kolej Universiti Islam, USIM was founded in 1998 and was conferred the status of full-fledged university in 2007.

USIM has some 13,440 scholars — a combined figure of matriculation, undergraduate and postgraduate students — with eight faculties offering five matriculation, 26 undergraduate courses and 33 postgraduate programmes.

CLOSING THE DIVIDE

"There is always a misconception that Islamic universities will never cover science. Islamic science itself is a new phrase," said Dr Mohamad



Amir Shaharuddin

Nasrin Mohamad Nasir, deputy director of Islamic Science Institute, a research centre that focuses on the subject.

Islamic Science Institute is USIM's platform to systematically plan the integration, especially through research and publication. It is also a formal body to gather the different expertise in USIM to work together to host, for instance, a lecture series on Islamic worldview and epistemology, definitions and concepts of Islamic Science. So a research problem is approached by all faculties combined together.

Mohamad Nasrin added: "The biggest challenge is to try to change people's perception of the integration