

Mosques join chorus of approval over right time for dawn prayer

Kaya Burgess
Religious Affairs Correspondent

Hundreds of mosques have come together to find a hi-tech solution to a problem that has faced Muslims for centuries — how to work out the exact time of dawn.

In a project to be replicated nationwide, mosques in Birmingham used astronomy cameras and crowd-sourcing to work out when to mark *fajr* (prayers at first light).

The break of dawn, about two hours before sunrise, varies across the UK. Even neighbouring mosques can vary the time of their morning prayers by 45 minutes because they use different formulae to calculate when daylight first spreads over the horizon.

In Birmingham, however, about 150,000 Muslims from diverse denominations now adhere to a synchronised timetable thanks to a project that asked worshippers to analyse 25,000 images of the pre-dawn sky taken over a year.

The OpenFajr project will be repeated in London and Peterborough, with hopes of extending it nationwide.

Some formulae used to calculate *fajr* time are based on a fixed time before sunrise and others on when the sun is at a set angle below the horizon. It is especially important during Ramadan,

because it marks the start of the fast. Shahid Merari, a GP and founder of OpenFajr, said: "During Ramadan we noticed in one local mosque people were still eating because their time of dawn hadn't set in, while next door they had started fasting and were performing morning prayers."

"In another, worshippers would already have prayed and gone home or to work."

He bought an astronomy camera that captures a 360-degree view of the horizon and mounted it on a rooftop to take a photograph every 60 seconds either side of dawn every day for a year.

About 25,000 images were sent to more than 170 local mosques and scholars and to experts at the University of Cambridge and HM Nautical Almanac Office, asking them which image captured first light each day. Statisticians filled in the gaps for overcast days.

Led by Birmingham Central mosque, local mosques signed up to a standardised timetable from May.

The Stanmore mosque in London will now mount a camera on a warehouse in Essex and the Husaini Islamic Centre in Peterborough starts its own project this month.

Dr Merari said that using open data to build consensus was "a blueprint for community cohesion".



Dorset dawn A chilly morning at Corfe Castle yesterday heralded a cold snap after an unseasonably balmy October. Snow

Hackers take revenge after protesters arrested

John Simpson
Crime Correspondent

Hackers claim to have shut down part of Scotland Yard's website for eight hours in revenge for dozens of arrests during an anti-capitalist march that ended in violence in central London.

The Met's news website was forced offline while thousands of protesters, many wearing Guy Fawkes masks, marked the fifth of November with the annual Million Mask March on parliament.

A member of the hacking collective Anonymous boasted of bringing down the section of the web-

site, which is separated from sensitive and operational systems, at about 9pm on Saturday. Tweeting under the name Crash Override, the hacker wrote "arrests=down-time bitch" as the site went offline.

The march, inspired by the graphic novel *V for Vendetta*, in which rebels opposing a repressive government wear Guy Fawkes masks, went from Trafalgar Square down Whitehall to the Houses of Parliament. A Russian flag was waved among anti-government placards and the group was heard to chant "one solution: revolution" and "Tory scum".

There were 53 arrests, mainly for



Marchers from the protest group Anonymous clashed with police officers in Trafalgar Square

suspected drugs offences and obstruction, as well as three for carrying blades. Fireworks and glass bottles were thrown towards the police as they tried to calm the crowd.

In an attempt to avoid a repeat of last year's violence when four officers and six horses were injured, 50 police vans and 2,000 officers were stationed around Whitehall, the Cenotaph, parliament and Buckingham Palace.

The Metropolitan police said yesterday: "The website is now working again, but it was down from [Saturday] evening until about 7am. We are investigating."

Legal Notice

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ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE ORAL HEARING OF THE FORTIS SETTLEMENT

ex article 1013 paragraph 5 of the Dutch Code of Civil Procedure, upon request and instruction of the Amsterdam Court of Appeal This announcement is addressed to all natural persons and legal entities who have acquired or held Fortis shares at any time during the period after February 28, 2007 through October 14, 2008 (these are the "eligible shareholders") and to foundations or associations with full legal authority which pursuant to their articles of association represent the interests of eligible shareholders.

Agreement

An agreement has been concluded between Ageas (the former Fortis), VEB, Deminor, SICAF, FortisEffect and Stichting FORsettlement, in order to collectively settle of claims of all eligible shareholders.

Content of the agreement

The agreement provides an arrangement for eligible shareholders allowing them to receive compensation, under certain conditions, in connection with the events that occurred in 2007 and 2008 at the former Fortis (now Ageas). It concerns events that may have impacted the price of the shares, specifically the communication (or the lack thereof) and the policy of Fortis with regard to its financial position, the takeover of ABN AMRO and the run-up to the break-up of Fortis, as described in more detail in the agreement.

Request for binding declaration

On May 23 2016 the parties to the agreement have requested the Amsterdam Court of Appeal to declare this agreement binding for all eligible shareholders.¹

Consequences of binding declaration

If the Amsterdam Court of Appeal declares the agreement binding, all eligible shareholders will be bound to the agreement. In certain cases, the agreement gives the eligible shareholders a claim to compensation under the conditions set out in the agreement. In addition, pursuant to the agreement the eligible shareholders shall fully and finally release Ageas, the (former) directors and officers of Ageas and the underwriting banks, from any claim relating to the events that occurred in 2007 and 2008 at Fortis.

Eligible shareholders who do not wish to be bound to the agreement can submit a statement to that effect (an "opt-out notice") within a period to be determined by the Amsterdam Court of Appeal which will be at least 3 months after the agreement has been declared binding. Eligible shareholders who submit a legally valid opt-out notice are not bound to the agreement but cannot derive any right from the agreement either, such as a potential claim to compensation. An opt-out notice may only be submitted after the Amsterdam Court of Appeal has declared the agreement binding.

Submission of a written defense

Eligible shareholders and foundations or associations with full legal authority, which pursuant to their articles of association

¹ In accordance with article 7:907 of the Dutch Civil Code.

Brits shake-up to avoid problem of 'all-white' Oscars

Kaya Burgess

Close to half of those who vote for the Brit Award winners next year will be women and nearly a fifth will be from ethnic minorities, almost double the levels among those who decide the Oscars.

The organisers of the awards are to overhaul the Brits Voting Academy, with invitations going out to more than 1,200 potential judges today.

The invitees are 52 per cent male and 48 per cent female, with 17 per cent from black, Asian and ethnic minority backgrounds. The British population, according to the 2011 census, is 51 per cent female and 14 per cent black, Asian or ethnic minority.

If all the invitations are accepted this will improve the gender and ethnic balance from this year, when 30 per cent of members were women and 15 per cent were from non-white backgrounds.

The 6,000 members of the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences came under fire for nominating 20 white actors for the 20 acting awards at the Oscars last year. Less than a third of the voters (27 per cent)

were women and 11 per cent were from minority backgrounds.

Of the 1,200 invitations sent out today for judges for the 2017 Brit Awards, 718 (or 57 per cent), went to members who have not voted before after Ged Doherty, chairman of the British Phonographic Industry, pledged to overhaul the voting academy.

Mr Doherty said: "I'm really proud that we've taken firm action to refresh the academy to ensure that it keeps up with trends in music and society at large. "I believe that as a result of these changes the Brits will be better equipped to reflect the diverse nature of Britain and British music."

"There's been a long-held myth that Brits winners and nominees are decided by industry executives in a smoke-filled room but the simple truth is that the awards are voted for each year by a 1,000-plus strong voting academy made up of experts drawn from all areas of music."

Voting begins on Friday, December 9 and closes on December 13. The award ceremony will be held on February 2 at the O₂ Arena in London.

is forecast in the north later this week. Weather, page 54

Thinking allowed

Dispatches

Tonight 8pm

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