

Media watchdog forum wins best female blog award

By Ali Shariati

A MEDIA watchdog forum run exclusively by Muslim women which critiques the Muslim female image in the media and popular culture was voted as Best Female Blog in a competition covering Muslim blogospheres.

Muslimah Media Watch (MMW) won the Sixth Annual Brass Crescent Award and received an "honourable mention" in the Best Group Blog category.

The judges described the founder of the blogsite, Fatemeh Fakhraie's group blog, as stacked with "inspiring and in-depth commentaries, reviews and articles. Islamic feminism at its best".

They also said MMW was "indispensable" and "a great source for modern Islamic feminist oriented, anti-racist/anti-Islamophobic critical writings".

MMW was also included as a first time finalist in the most prestigious award for Best Blog with nominators calling it "thought provoking" and "consistently brilliant".

In a statement MMW said: "This is the first year we've actually won, and your support (in a blog award and every day) means a lot to us."

The people behind the blog said the reason MMW was set up was because they were "tired of seeing ourselves [Muslim women] portrayed

by the media in ways that are one-dimensional and misleading".

It adds: "As Muslim feminists we aim to locate and critique misogyny, sexism, patriarchy, Islamophobia, racism, and xenophobia as they affect Muslim women. Furthermore, we believe in equal opportunities, equal respect, equal freedom, and equal value — regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, and ability.

Nearly 800 people voted this year and voted Imam Suhaib Webb's blog as the 'Best' with fans finding his blog "incredibly useful" and a "treasure trove of insight" into spiritual, cultural, and political issues.

The Brass Crescent Awards started in 2004 with the purpose of "promoting the best writing of the Muslim web and exposing them to a greater number of readers".



US blunder allowed Bin Laden to escape



A concerted attack on Osama bin Laden's hideout in Afghanistan in 2001 by the US military could have led to his capture or death, according to a report prepared for the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

The report said the al-Qa'ida leader's escape was a lost opportunity that altered the course of the war and paved the way for insurgencies in Afghanistan and in Pakistan.

During their pursuit of Bin Laden, US military leaders allowed Afghan militiamen to spearhead an unsuccessful large-scale assault on the Tora Bora mountains in 2001 which resulted in Bin Laden's escape.

"The decisions that opened the door for his escape to Pakistan allowed bin Laden to emerge as a potent symbolic figure who continues to attract a steady flow of money and inspire fanatics worldwide," the report said.

9,000 more Marines set for Afghanistan

The US presence in Afghanistan will be doubled as it prepares to deploy up to 9,000 Marines to the Helmand province following President Barack Obama's war strategy announcement this week, the Washington Post reported.

Some 1,000 army trainers will follow the Marine's deployment, perhaps by February next year, the paper said.

The aim is to regain a footing in the region that has been a base for a fierce Taliban resistance in recent months.

"The first troops out of the door are going to be Marines," General James Conway, the top Marine officer, was quoted as telling soldiers in Afghanistan on Saturday.

"We've been leaning forward in anticipation of a decision. And we've got some pretty stiff fighting coming," he was reported to have said.

Obama has been weighing requests from his Afghan war commander, General Stanley McChrystal, to send up to 40,000 more troops to join 68,000 US troops already in Afghanistan.

Meanwhile US officials are pressing NATO for an additional 10,000 troops to augment the US troop surge.

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WORLD SNIPPETS

German General resigns over airstrike expose

The chief of staff of the German armed forces resigned after his initial claims that no civilians were killed during a September airstrike in Afghanistan were shown to be false.

Citing a classified internal report, the daily newspaper Bild said that officials in the Defence Ministry were aware almost from the start that civilians had been killed.

The report said the Defence Ministry was given "clear indications" about civilian casualties.

The chief of staff, General Wolfgang Schneiderhan and a senior official in the Defence Ministry, State Secretary Peter Wichert, resigned.

Franz Josef Jung, who was defence minister at the time of the attacks, repeatedly claimed that only insurgents had been killed.

Aliens 'exist on earth' - Bulgarian scientists

Aliens from beyond earth are already in contact with Bulgarian government scientists, it was reported this week.

The scientists even claim they are already in contact with extraterrestrial life and are working on deciphering a complex set of symbols sent to them, scientists from the country's Space Research Institute said.

They claim aliens are currently answering 30 questions posed to them.

Lachezar Filipov, deputy director of the Space Research Institute of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, confirmed the research.

"Aliens are currently all around us, and are watching us all the time," Mr Filipov told Bulgarian media.

He said humans were not going to contact the extraterrestrials via radio waves but through the power of thought.

"The human race was certainly going to have direct contact with the aliens in the next 10 to 15 years," he said.

The publication of the BAS researchers report concerning communicating with aliens comes in the midst of a controversy over the role, feasibility, and reform of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

'Big Bang Machine' sets new energy record

The European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN) announced that its Large Hadron Collider (LHC), also known as the 'big bang machine', set a world record by accelerating to energy levels never before reached, the Telegraph reported.

It accelerated twin protons to an energy of 1.18 trillion electronvolts (TeV)", the organisation said.

CERN wants to reach 7.TeV to replicate the big bang that started the universe.

Costing 3.9b Euros, it is hoped LHC might prove the existence of the Higgs Boson, or the "God Particle", which would explain how particles acquire mass.

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