



Theme

Innovation and development of Information Networking and Database Related to Islam

Presenter

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Topic

E-Fatwa Information Management:
Sustenance And Enhancement Towards Friendly And Efficient Online Database

**E-FATWA INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:
SUSTAINANCE AND ENHANCEMENT TOWARDS FRIENDLY
AND EFFICIENT ONLINE DATABASE**

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Abstract

The importance of fatwa in our everyday lives cannot be denied. This is because Islam commands Muslims to ask those who are more learned and pious if they do not know. In the current practice, only the Mufti who is elected in a country can carry out the process of issuing a fatwa when deciding a certain ruling. And the Muslim community living in the country should obey the fatwa given after an agreed process from the ulama' and the experts in certain fields. This needs to consider the establishment of firmed, friendly and efficient institution to deliver fatwa for public. In parallel of current needs, any resources institution should be more friendly and efficient through online. In this case, e-Fatwa application has been launched in Malaysia by the Prime Minister since 2003. It is very much contributing Muslim community and must be well sustained, enhanced and updated from time to time. This paper shares UiTM experience of doing evaluative research and consultancy in providing special training and consultancy for all mufti's departments towards developing, sustaining and enhancing fatwa database management.

I really hope the publication of e-Fatwa can help our society to understand more about the fatwa and fatwa produce by our Muslims Scholars and be close with them. From this effort, I hope our society can discuss openly the solution of current issues

nowadays that suits to the doctrine of Islam which is very comprehensive and up-to-date.

(Minister, Department of Prime Minister)

I hope this e-Fatwa can be a reference to the society to seek for certain fatwa according to certain problems. Thus, with the existence of e-Fatwa can develop more on knowledge activities.

(Head of Director, JAKIM)

It looks easier, but only Allah the Almighty knows. It is not a simple work to success in producing software in the web server, but also the high commitment of all officers from JAKIM and Jabatan Mufti from all over Malaysia that make the project of e-Fatwa a successful one.

(ICT JAKIM Service unit)

e-Fatwa Portal Establishment

Website of Jabatan Kemajuan Malaysia (JAKIM) defines e-Fatwa as a website that provides information on published juristic acts that have been endorsed by all countries in Malaysia. E-Fatwa is a web base application, organized by ICT Service unit and been updated by the Technical Committee which are consists of officers from the Departments of Mufti all over Malaysia.

Technically, e-Fatwa is not only a normal website, but it manages the database application of fatwa electronically as its main function. This e-Fatwa is organized by authorized officers from JAKIM and Departments of Mufti all over Malaysia since year 2001. The existence portal of e-Fatwa emerges the Islamic information on the net. It has been launched formally by our prime minister, Dato' Seri Abdullah Bin Hj. Ahmad Badawi in the Event of Meeting Between Prime Minister with Muslim Scholars which was held on 23rd December 2003 in Kuala Lumpur. Almost after four years been utilizing this website, the portal of e-fatwa now has more than 169316 guests since April 2003. (<http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my> 7/5/2007). After about one year, guests have increased to be about 200000 in August 2008.

In a knowledge society with e-government application, knowledge is the key component for development of the society. A knowledge based society need updated information, efficiently, timely and friendly. Thus, fatwa is considered as the main reference and guides for Muslims in their legislative cases and daily life as the whole. The increase of guest number for about 40000 guests within one year shows that the portal has been much referred.

Current Practice of e-Fatwa Service

Recently, we have been familiar with the term of “techno-daie” which is first being introduced by *Institut Kefahaman Islam Malaysia* (IKIM) few years ago. The success of combining between the technology people with the Muslim Scholars in this project of e-

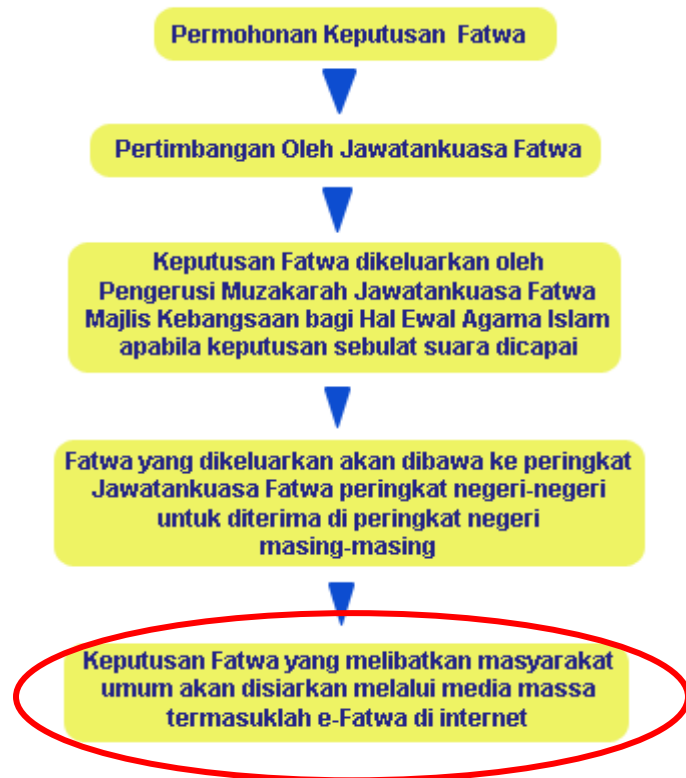
Fatwa shows that as Muslims society, we need to work very hard in group or collectively.

The second phase of our success is the strong commitment given in producing variety channels of disseminating information in e-Fatwa for instance e-forum between the management of Juristic Acts endorse in all countries. This effort helps them a lot especially in solving problems through the net virtually without have special meeting visibly. In fact, through this channel, they can have pre-discussion before a certain meeting is held.

The previous Head of Director, JAKIM, Datuk Dr. Abdul Munir Yaacob thought that this e-fatwa portal can disseminate complete information to our society. It is also help people who are very difficult to get the printed documents of Juristic Acts before to reach the information needed timely. (<http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my>).

Datuk Seri Harussani Zakaria claimed that through the launching portal of e-Fatwa was being done at the right time to give information to society and very beneficial to the group of teenagers to seek those information on fatwa in Malaysia.

In Malaysia, e-fatwa plays a very significant roles in communicating the society with the authoritative Muslim Scholars who deals more on the aspects of everyday life such as *akidah*, *ibadah*, *muamalat*, *munakahat* and others. It is clearly shown in the following table explaining the process or procedure in order to disseminate to others.



Steps of Producing Juristic Acts

Source: <http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my>

(source: <http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my>)

This e-Fatwa portal has two main categories which consists of Published Fatwa and Unpublished Fatwa in Malaysia. Until August 2008, e-fatwa has provided many information regarding both categories (as shown in the following table).

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| COUNTRY | PUBLISHED | UNPUBLISHED | CLASSIFICATION |
|----------------|------------------|--------------------|--|
| Perlis | 1* 1 | 86* 94 | Akidah-Zakat-Ibadat-Munakahat-Ekonomi-Perubatan-Makan Minum-Pakaian-Haiwan-Sosial/ Syariat |
| Kedah | 7* 11 | 33* 37 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat-Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat-Lain-lain |
| P Pinang | 10* 10 | 149* 219 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat-Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat-Jenayah-Lain-lain |
| Perak | 10* 11 | 147* 147 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat-Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat-Lain-lain **107 are Lain-lain |
| Kelantan | 7* 12 | 33* 46 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat-Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat |
| Terengganu | 7* 7 | 55* 367 | Akidah -Muamalat-Munakahat-Sosial/Syariat **Majority are Lain-lain and Sosial/ Syariat |
| Pahang | 10* 10 | 1* 2 | Akidah-Sosial/ Syariat-Lain-lain |
| Selangor | 65* 83 | 127* 125 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat-Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat-Lain-lain |
| N Sembilan | 9* 12 | 1* 3 | Akidah-Muamalat-Sosial/ Syariat-Jenayah-Ibadat-Lain-lain |
| Johor | 2* 10 | 19* 18 | Akidah-Muamalat-Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat-Lain-lain |

| | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|--|
| Melaka | 17* 20 | 1* 0 | Akidah-Ibadat |
| W P'kutuan | 31* 41 | 0* 2 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat- Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat **5 without classification (remain) |
| Sarawak | 4* 4 | 0* 0 | Akidah- Lain-lain |
| Sabah | 11* 14 | 0* 0 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat- Sosial/ Syariat |
| Kebangsaan | 0* 0 | 150 150 | Akidah-Muamalat-Munakahat- Sosial/ Syariat-Ibadat-Lain-lain |

* uploaded by May 2007

** writer's analysis & comment

Fatwa and Its Classifications in e-Fatwa Portal

(source: <http://www.e-fatwa.gov.my>)

Focusing on the content of the current e-fatwa portal, it shows that some states include in the portal the published fatwa, while some excludes those fatwa including Sarawak and Sabah. In facts, some of the classifications are different from one state to another for instance; the use of hormone is classified as "medicine" while the others classified it as "others".

On the other aspect, it shows that the classification done is not monitored by a certain methodology. As a result, we can see many

different classifications have been made in the portal that sometimes can confuse the users.

There is also contradiction between the explanations on the fatwa. This explanation is very important for the users to understand how the decision is being made. Therefore, by having different explanation will affect the society to understand more about this concept and will lead the society to be in a conflict dilemma.

On the contrary, it is shown in the portal that the latest fatwa was endorsed in year 2005 (national) and 2007 (Wilayah Persekutuan, Kelantan etc). Ironically, it seems that no endorsement being made form year 2005 in national level until now, even though it is known that there were few fatwa being endorsed. Supposedly, this portal is being updated accordingly so that the society can get the information timely, without any delay for publication or compilation as in traditional way.

Issues and Recommendation

In an e-government practice, one of the goals is to make tacit knowledge more widely available and to the degree possible, capture it in explicit term which is systematically documented know-how that becomes available to everyone (Rahmat Mohamad, 2003).

One simple survey has been done among 60 Islamic education experts and lecturers in Universiti Teknologi MARA Shah Alam.

However, only 13 respondents have completed and returned the questionnaire. All respondents agreed that e-fatwa portal is very much important to Muslim community. It could be a positive image for Islamic state, and Muslim community as well as the resource of contemporary jurisprudence.

Among issues which have been highlighted are:

1. Portal Friendliness
2. Portal Efficiency
3. Information Efficacy

All respondents agreed that the portal existence must be publicized and widely promoted to all Muslim community. Without denying the importance of the portal to the society, about 44% of 13 respondents disagreed the easiness of accessing to specific fatwa. This might need search key engine to be provided; such a subject search, year search or etc. Besides, almost half of respondent suggested having friendlier interface.

In term of portal efficiency, e-fatwa portal could be considered as simple and fast access through internet, for it has less graphic and less big-size resources. However, more than half respondents claimed that they have to surf all subjects to find one needed information. This leads to unwise use of time and resources. On the other hand, all fatwa which are provided in the portal have their own categories without any consistency or specific standard. Almost

54% of respondents claimed that they found inconsistency of subject categorization.

In term of information provided in the portal, majority of the respondent are happy to have all published and unpublished fatwa in the portal, but most of them (54%) are disappointed with the explanation for the fatwa. Different states have their own policy to expose the reasons for specific fatwa on the net. Almost all respondents agreed that reasons for the fatwa are very much important as reference. Other required items such as topic, fatwa itself, classification, year and reasons should be standardized.

The study found that among Islamic education experts and lecturers who are using the e-fatwa portal are very happy with the initiative of e-fatwa portal by the government. Some suggestions to sustain and enhance the e-fatwa portal to be more reliable, efficient and friendly, among them are:

- Fatwa information to be updated
- Classification to be consistent and standardized
- Search engine to be provided
- Interactive room for explanation (eQ&A) to be provided
- Reference i.e year, reasons etc must be attached
- Multimedia/ graphic supports to be considered
- Leading issues (asbab) to the Fatwa to be exposed
- Interactive room with the muftis (e-Forum) to be activated

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| Suggested Items to be Displayed | Respondents | % |
|--|--------------------|----------|
| Classification (eg. <i>akidah, ibadah, muamalat etc.</i>) | 13 | 100% |
| Result of Fatwa (Published & Unpublished) | 13 | 100% |
| Published Date | 12 | 92.5% |
| Interactive Room for Explanation | 12 | 92.5% |
| Reasons for the Fatwa | 11 | 84.5% |
| Interactive Room for Scholars and the Mufti | 11 | 84.5% |
| Topic of the Fatwa | 10 | 77% |
| Reasons/ Issues of the Fatwa | 8 | 61.5% |
| Links to Other Country's e-Fatwa | 1 | 7.5% |

In other hand, the survey found some suggestions about the standardizing classification of fatwa to be applied, among them are classification according to juristic prominent scholars, special customized e-fatwa classification, Islamic legislative classification and others (as shown in the following table).

| Suggested Classification | Respondent | % |
|---|-------------------|----------|
| According to Prominent Fiqh Scholars | 7 | 54% |
| Special Customized | 7 | 54% |
| According to Islamic Legislative Classification | 4 | 31 |
| According to Library Classification | 3 | 23 |

All these suggestions could be the solution to sustain and enhance the e-fatwa portal to be more efficient and friendly among Muslim community. Fortunately, Malaysia has led this kind of initiative as other Muslim countries are following us one step back. In advance, fatwa management in Malaysia is very much more systematically, compared to other countries which centralized under Islamic Affairs Department (JAKIM) with endorsement by states government.

This simple study is surely need further comprehensive study with details of specific area of research and development from time to time. E-Fatwa should be the main streaming way of dakwah or preaching latest information regarding daily life and it must be easily received and accessed (Awang Abdul Aziz Juned, 1997). This is to ensure the e-fatwa portal continuously relevant to Muslim community; locally and globally.

Conclusion

In short, it is understood that fatwa is something important to Muslim community after Al Quran and prophet's traditions. In addition, we are facing many new and confusing phenomena which urgently need to the authorized scholar's views; that is fatwa. E-Fatwa becomes the best solution for such Muslim community in this era of information and communication technology. It should be the most authoritative reference with only clicks, accessible, friendly, reliable, up to date, timely and long life reference (247). Hence it must be sustained and enhanced with some value added system and better management.

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