

## Local FEATURES

# Sumait University embarks on higher degree programme

**THE Zanzibar based Abdulrahman Al-Sumait University (SUMAIT University) introduces a Master of Arts (M.A.) in Shariah and Islamic Jurisprudence programme in April this year. The programme which is the first of its kind in the Universities of Tanzania has already been granted accreditation by the Tanzania Commission of Universities (TCU) with effect from the academic year 2019/2020. In this exclusive interview with the Zanzibar Mail (ZM) correspondent, Burhani Muhunzi, the University's Director of Research and Postgraduate Studies (DRPGS), Prof. Yunis Abdille Musa gives the details of the programme.**

**ZM: What is the background to the programme?**

**DRPGS:** The process took us almost five years when the programme was finally approved by the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU). It started back in 2014 when we were a University College of Education Zanzibar (UCEZ) affiliated to the Khartoum based International University of Africa (IUA). For three years between 2014 and 2019 a number of collaborative and consultative academic meetings were held internally to thoroughly discuss the proposed syllabus with participation of experts on Shariah and Islamic Jurisprudence from SUMAIT University, Zanzibar University (ZU), Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), International University of Africa (IUA) and the Zanzibar Muslim Academy. After all

these discussions, in 2016 we submitted the English version of our report to the Tanzania Commission for Universities (TCU) who directed us to do some corrections to conform with their guidelines. Between 2017 and 2019, we were repeatedly instructed to improve the draft syllabus which we tirelessly and repeatedly did it. Finally, on 21st January 2020 we received a letter from the TCU informing us that its 97th Special Meeting held on 20th January, 2020 had granted accreditation to the Master of Arts in Shariah and Islamic Jurisprudence with effect from 2019/2020 Academic Year. Praise be to Allah, Lord of the Worlds.

**ZM: Why SUMAIT University thought of deciding to introduce this programme?**

**DRPGS:** We decided to introduce the programme after taking into serious consideration of a number of factors. First there are many degree graduates in Islamic Studies around who for many years back had completed their studies locally and abroad but would not easily

advance to higher degrees because of unavailability of such programmes in the local universities.

To elaborate on that point. Currently, there are many first degree holders who had pursued Islamic Studies at SUMAIT University, Azhar Sharif University, Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), International University of Africa (IUA) and International Islamic University in Malaysia (IIUM) who would not easily pursue further studies abroad because of exorbitant study costs involving travelling, tuition fee, accommodation and other related costs.

Secondly, the University had also thought of a number of graduates who are working as Kadhi Courts Magistrates, Commissions responsible for Islamic Endowments, Marriages and Inheritance in Zanzibar and Kenya; there are those working as lecturers, consultants and the ones involved in da'wah work who would also like to increase their knowledge through higher degrees programmes. All these categories of people are potential candidates of this programme.

It is our great hope that the Master of Arts in Shariah and Islamic Jurisprudence programme which we are going to offer and which has targeted all these potential categories of first degrees holders will fill the existing gap on higher degree programmes related to Islam.

**ZM: What preparations have you made for the programme take off?**

**DRPGS:** Immediately after receiving the letter of the accreditation from the TCU, we at the Faculty of Shariah and Islamic Studies sat down to discuss the programme modus operandi in which a number of issues were raised including qualifications, mode, duration and costs. We reached a decision that qualified candidates should be holders of first class or upper second first degrees in Islamic Studies and should be fluent in Arabic Language. We said the programme would cover four semesters of course work and thesis. Further, the programme will be conducted in the afternoon between 1.30pm and 6.30pm to allow those working in public offices to attend. The programme is expected to take off in April this year, initially with 25 students to conform with the TCU requirements.

**ZM: Can you elaborate on the details of the programme coverage?**

**DRPGS:** As I have already mentioned. The programme will be covered in four semesters. The first semester will cover five courses related to Shariah while the second semester will also cover five courses on Shariah and Research Methodology. Semester three will involve selection of the research topic in which a student will be required to make a presentation to the post-graduate committee. After the topic has been approved a student will be attached to a supervisor from a local university to start the research process in semester three and semester



**Prof. Yunis Abdille Musa**

four.

**ZM: What is the strength of your academic staff to conduct the programme successfully?**

**DRPGS:** I am glad to say we have adequate qualified staff to conduct this programme successfully. The Faculty of Shariah and Islamic Studies has five full time experienced PhD holders in addition to three part timers of the same academic credentials; all of them are experienced in teaching and supervising postgraduate students. In this aspect I can say with confidence that we are well prepared.

**ZM: Do you have enough facilities to conduct the programme?**

**DRPGS:** The SUMAIT University Library has the largest section of Islamic literature with books on Tafsir, Hadith, Quran and Arabic Language covering all the Islamic Schools of thought of Imam Malik, Imam Shafii, Imam Hanbal and Imam Abu Hanifa. I think that SUMAIT University library is the largest university library in the country with Islamic literature. We have the special reserve section for references. In addition there is e-library service. We have reserved a well furnished lecture room for the post-graduate students. I can say that we are well prepared for the programme take off.

