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Institutionalising Shura: Brunei's Legislative Council and Ummah Sustainability

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Abstract

This article examines the institutional process of Brunei Darussalam's Legislative Council (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negara*, MMN) as a consultative accountability mechanism within the philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB). The paper studies MMN within the broader discourse of Islamic governance and civilizational sustainability, highlighting how Islamic principles of *amanah* (trust), *shura* (consultation), and *hisāb* (reckoning) are preserved and adapted in contemporary institutional practice. Drawing on selected Hansard records, the research traces the stages of preparation, deliberation, financial oversight, and follow-up, demonstrating how these processes embodied the accountability cycle. The analysis of Hansard debates reveals that MMN contributes to transparency and answerability by enabling structured questioning, financial scrutiny, and policy clarification. At the same time, its advisory status and appointment-based membership shape the nature of its contributions, reflecting Brunei's distinctive model of consultative governance that balances representation with continuity and stability. This structural arrangement underscores how institutional design can preserve ethical accountability while maintaining harmony within Brunei's governance framework. By situating MMN within the *amanah–shura–hisāb* cycle, the article demonstrates how consultative governance contributes to the sustainability of the ummah. The preservation of trust, consultation, and reckoning within governance ensures resilience against contemporary challenges. The case study underscores the relevance of Islamic accountability principles in contemporary governance, in this way, Brunei's MMN offers insights into how Islamic governance principles can be procedurally embedded to safeguard civilizational continuity and the sustainability of the ummah in the modern era.

Keywords: *Shura*, Islamic Governance, The Legislative Council, Ummah sustainability, Brunei Darussalam.

i. Introduction

The principle of accountability (*hisāb*) occupies a central place in Islamic governance, forming part of the ethical cycle alongside *amanah* (trust) and *shura* (consultation). Drawing from Qur'anic injunctions and Prophetic traditions, these sources have consistently emphasised that rulers and institutions are bound by responsibility to both God and the community. In contemporary contexts, these principles remain relevant as Muslim societies seek to institutionalise governance practices that preserve ethical accountability while adapting to modern administrative realities. Classical scholars such as al-Mawardi and Ibn Taymiyyah elaborated these principles into structured governance models, emphasising consultation, justice, and the welfare of the *ummah*. Their works demonstrate that accountability in Islamic governance is both spiritual and institutional, binding leaders to ethical responsibility.[1] In modern contexts, scholars such as Kamali and Ogunbado have revisited these principles to address contemporary challenges, arguing that shura can be adapted into consultative councils, parliaments, and advisory bodies that preserve ethical oversight while accommodating administrative realities. The *ummah* functions as Allah's *khalīfah* on earth, entrusted with the responsibility of reconstructing the world in accordance with divine will. In this sense, it parallels the state, possessing sovereignty along with the organs and powers necessary to exercise that sovereignty. Al-Faruqi further explains that the *ummah* itself embodies the caliphate, with its exercise of sovereignty being constitutive and foundational to its identity.[2] As *khalīfah* (trustees), humans are tasked with preserving ecological balance (*mīzān*), upholding justice, and ensuring the continuity of spiritual, moral, social, and environmental well-being across generations under accountability to God. Unlike secular models such as the Brundtland Commission's resource-based definition, the Islamic framework embeds sustainability within Qur'anic principles, Prophetic guidance, and the *maqasid al-sharī'ah*, thereby uniting ecological stewardship with moral and spiritual accountability.[3] This holistic vision situates governance not merely as administrative efficiency but as a civilizational project aimed at sustaining the *ummah.*

Brunei Darussalam provides a distinctive case study in this regard. Guided by the philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB), Brunei's governance system integrates Malay tradition, Islamic values, and monarchical leadership. Within this

1 Al-Mawardi. (n.d). *Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah The Laws of Islamic Governance.* Asadullah Yate (Trans.). London: Ta-Ha Publishers; Ibn Taymiyyah. (2005). *The Political Shari'Ah On Reforming The Ruler And The Ruled*. A. G. al-Hanafi (Trans.). Cairo: Dar al-Fiqh.
2 Al- Fārūqī, Ismā'īl Rājī. (1992). *Al-Tawhīd: Its Implications for thought and life*. USA: International institute of Islamic Thought. p.143.
3 Zainab Abdul Latiff, Mohd Yazid Mohd Yunus, Md Azree Othuman Mydin.(2016). "The Theory of Sustainability from Islamic Perspective." *Research Journal Of Fisheries And Hydrobiology*, 11(3): 179-183.

framework, the Legislative Council or *Majlis Mesyuarat Negara* (MMN) functions as a consultative body that deliberates on policies, budgets, and national issues. Although advisory in nature, MMN embodies the institutionalisation of *shura*, offering structured contributions that reinforce transparency, fiscal responsibility, and ethical oversight. Existing scholarship has examined Islamic governance broadly, as well as Brunei's MIB philosophy and MMN's advisory role. However, few studies have explicitly connected MMN's institutional processes to the *amanah–shura–hisāb* accountability cycle, nor situated them within the discourse of ummah sustainability and civilizational resilience. This gap is significant, given the growing importance of consultative accountability in addressing contemporary challenges such as technological transformation and the rise of artificial intelligence. This article seeks to address that gap by analysing MMN as an institutionalisation of *shura* within Brunei's governance system. Drawing on Hansard records, the study examines how preparation, deliberation, financial oversight, and follow-up stages reflect the principles of trust, consultation, and reckoning. In doing so, the research underscores the relevance of Islamic accountability principles in contemporary governance and highlights how Brunei's consultative model contributes to civilizational continuity and the sustainability of the ummah.

ii. Research Objectives

This study examines the institutionalisation of *shura* within Brunei Darussalam's Legislative Council (MMN) and to analyse its structural arrangements through the lens of the *amanah–shura–hisāb* accountability cycle. It seeks to:

1. Explore the classical foundations of *amanah-shura-hisab* as principles of Islamic governance and accountability.
2. Examine the way of Islamic principles of *amanah-shura-hisab* are embodied within the structural process of Brunei Darussalam's Legislative Council (MMN)
3. Evaluate the contribution of MMN's consultative practices to ummah sustainability.

iii. Research Questions

To support the examination of the institutionalisation of *shura* within Brunei Darussalam's Legislative Council (MMN) through the lens of the *amanah–shura–hisāb* accountability cycle, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the classical foundations of *amanah-shura-hisab* as principles of Islamic governance and accountability?
2. How are the principles of *amanah-shura-hisab* embodied within the structural process of Brunei's Legislative Council (MMN)?
3. How do MMN's consultative practices contribute to the sustainability of the ummah?

iv. Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative case study approach, focusing on Brunei Darussalam's Legislative Council (MMN) as an institutionalisation of *shura* within the *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB) governance framework. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the study seeks to understand how consultative processes are institutionalised and interpreted within the context of Islamic governance rather than to measure causality or statistical relationships. The focus is therefore placed on the meaning, structure, and operation of consultative practices as reflected in official parliamentary records. The study is guided by the Islamic governance framework of *amānah* (trust), *shūrā* (consultation), and *hisāb* (accountability), which serves as the conceptual lens for analysing the institutional processes and deliberative practices of MMN. Through this framework, the research examines how consultative governance contributes to accountability and the broader sustainability of the *ummah* The research relies on both primary and secondary sources. The primary data source consists of official Hansard records of the *Majlis Mesyuarat Negara* from 2021 to 2026. These records provide verbatim accounts of parliamentary proceedings, including the Royal Address, motions of thanks (*Usul Menjunjung Titah*), oral and written questions, ministerial responses, debates, committee discussions, budget deliberations, and recorded decisions. Secondary sources comprise books, journal articles, conference papers, policy documents, and official publications relating to Islamic governance, *shūrā*, accountability, sustainability, *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and Brunei's philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB). These sources provide the theoretical and conceptual foundations for interpreting the findings.

The Hansard records were analysed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns related to MMN's consultative practices. The analysis was conducted in three stages. First, the Hansards were reviewed repeatedly to develop a comprehensive understanding of the structure, procedures, and content of MMN proceedings. Second, relevant passages were coded according to themes derived from the study's conceptual framework, including *amānah* (trust), *shūrā* (consultation), *hisāb* (accountability), transparency, answerability, financial oversight, public welfare, stewardship, and sustainability. Third, the coded data were synthesised into broader analytical themes, namely the institutionalisation of consultation (*shūrā*), accountability and answerability (*hisāb*), governance as trust (*amānah*), financial oversight and transparency, and contributions to social, economic, and civilisational sustainability. The findings were subsequently

interpreted through the *amānah-shūrā-hisāb* framework to assess how MMN's consultative practices contribute to accountability and the sustainability of the *ummah*. The study is limited to document analysis and relies primarily on publicly available Hansard records as evidence of MMN's consultative practices. As such, it does not incorporate interviews with Council members, ministers, or government officials, and consequently focuses on observable institutional practices and recorded deliberations rather than individual perceptions, intentions, or motivations. While the Hansards constitute authoritative documentation of MMN proceedings, the Council's advisory status and appointment-based membership may influence the scope of representation reflected in the deliberations. These factors are recognised as methodological considerations; nevertheless, the use of Hansard records remains valuable for examining how consultative practices are institutionalised and for situating MMN within the broader discourse on Islamic governance, accountability, and *ummah* sustainability.

v. Literature Review

Shura occupies a foundational place in Islamic political thought. Linguistically, shura derived from the arabic root sh-w-r, which connotes signaling, advising, and even extracting honey from a hive and gather it[4]- a metaphor that underscores consultation as a collective process yielding wisdom and benefit for society. M. Quraish Shihab extends the metaphor by likening consultation to the disciplined and purposeful activity of bees. Just as bees do not attack unless provoked, and even their sting can serve as a remedy, consultation functions as a corrective mechanism that restrains the excesses of authority.[5] Classical scholars such as al-Mawardi in al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah and Ibn Taymiyyah in his political writings emphasised that rulers must govern in accordance with Sharīʿah and remain accountable both to God and to their communities.[6] This insistence on consultation as a binding practice situates shura not merely as participatory dialogue but as a structural mechanism of accountability. The Qur'an itself elevates consultation to the level of communal duty, as in Surah al-Shura (42:38): "and those who conduct their affairs by mutual consultation". Prophetic practice reinforced this principle, with the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consulting his companions in matters of war and governance, even when divine revelation had already provided guidance.[7] This demonstrates that consultation was not symbolic but a practical accountability mechanism that restrained arbitrariness and fostered collective responsibility. Scholars also debated whether shura was advisory or binding. Al-Ṣallābī argued strongly that neglecting consultation undermines the Sharīʿah legitimacy of governance, framing shura as a constitutional obligation.[8] Al-Raysuni expanded the scriptural basis by showing that consultation appears across Qur'anic narratives — from God's dialogue with the angels (2:30–32) to Abraham consulting his son (37:102) — thereby embedding consultation as a foundational social practice instituted at creation.[9] These perspectives converge to present shura as both a religious obligation and an institutional necessity. Philosophical reflections deepen this view. Syed Naquib al-Attas interprets accountability as an intrinsic aspect of dīn, understood as indebtedness and submission to divine authority. Within this conception, *shura* represents the collective manifestation of that indebtedness, translating spiritual obligation into a structured communal practice.[10] In this sense, consultation is not only procedural but existential, reinforcing the sacred trust (amanah) of leadership and the inevitability of divine reckoning (hisāb). Together, amanah, shura, and hisāb form an integrated accountability cycle that binds rulers to justice, transparency, and responsibility.

Modern scholarship has sought to reinterpret classical principles of shura within contemporary governance frameworks. Mohammad Hashim Kamali argues that consultation is not only a moral duty but also a constitutional requirement in Islamic governance, linking it to transparency, inclusivity, and the protection of public interest.[11] Ahamad Faosiy Ogunbado reinforces this view by emphasising that even the Prophet Muhammad, despite divine guidance, was commanded to consult his companions, thereby establishing consultation as a binding principle of accountability.[12] This situates shura as a reciprocal mechanism: rulers must consult, and communities must voice their opinions. Governance literature outside the Islamic tradition provides useful parallels. Tero Erkkilä identifies a global transition from hierarchical models of accountability toward deliberative and network-based approaches, a shift that closely parallels Islamic notions of collective consultation (*shura*).[13] Similarly, Khotami distinguishes between vertical accountability (to higher authorities) and horizontal accountability (to society), a framework that mirrors Islamic categories of divine accountability (*hisāb*) and

4 Ibn Manzur. (n.d). *Lisan al-Arab*.n.pl: Dar Al-Maaref. p2358
5 M. Quraish Shihab. (2023). Islam & *Politik: Perilaku Politik Berkeadaan.* Tangerang Selatan: Lentera Hati.p138.
6 Al-Mawardi. (n.d.). Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah; Ibn Taymiyyah. (2005). The Political Shari'Ah.
7 Ogunbado, Ahamad Faosiy. (2019). *Leadership in Islam: Ibn Khaldūn's perspective*. Negara Brunei Darussalam: UNISSA Press.p72-77
8 Al-Ṣallābi, Dr Ali Muhammad. (2010). *Al-Shūrā Farīḍah Islāmiyyah.* Cairo: Muassasah Iqra'. p5-6.
9 Al-Raysuni, Ahmad. (2011). *Al-Shura: The Qur'anic principle of consultation, a tool for reconstruction and reform.* Nancy Roberts (Trans.). London Washington: International Institute of Islamic Thought.p1-3.
10 Al-Attas, Syed Muhammad Naquib. (2020). *Islam The Concept of Religion and The Foundation of Ethics and Morality.* Kuala Lumpur: Ta'dib International.
11 Kamali, M. H. (1991). *Principles of Islamic jurisprudence*. Cambridge: Islamic Texts Society.
12 Ogunbado. (2019). Leadership in Islam. pp.72–77.
13 Erkkilä, Tero. (2007). Governance and Accountability – A cShift in Conceptualisation. *Public Administration Quarterly, Spring Issue*.p2-9

communal accountability through shura.[14] Contemporary Muslim scholars also highlight the institutionalisation of shura as a mechanism of ethical restraint. Arieff Salleh Rosman et al. contend that Qur'anic injunctions on consultation extend beyond participatory dialogue, functioning as accountability mechanisms that compel leaders to justify their decisions before the community.[15] Imam Taufiq adds that for accountability to be meaningful, transparency is essential and situating shura as a deliberative practice that fosters justice and collective responsibility.[16] Together, these perspectives underscore that shura in modern governance is best understood as an institutionalised accountability mechanism, bridging spiritual obligations with procedural safeguards. Recent scholarship has advanced the concept of Tawhidic Leadership, which situates governance within the principle of divine unity (*tawhid*) and emphasizes ethical responsibility. Ruhullah and Ushama argue that *shura* and *amanah* are the twin pillars of Islamic leadership, fostering inclusivity, transparency, and accountability.[17] Their study highlights that consultation is not merely advisory but a binding principle that strengthens public trust, while *amanah* enforces integrity and stewardship in leadership. They further introduce the notion of "Shuracracy," a system rooted in Qur'anic consultation that predates western democratic theories, thereby presenting Islamic governance as an early prototype of ethical accountability.[18] This perspective reinforces the relevance of *amanah–shura–hisab* as a comprehensive accountability cycle adaptable to modern governance contexts, including Brunei's MMN. Brunei Darussalam's governance system is explicitly framed by the national philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* (MIB), which integrates Malay culture, Islam, and monarchy as the pillars of national identity and administration. Within this framework, the Sultan serves as both head of state and government, as well as the head of religion, positioning MIB as a comprehensive model of Islamic governance.[19]

The Legislative Council (*Majlis Mesyuarat Negara*, MMN), established under the 1959 Constitution, functions as the highest legislative body in Brunei. It provides a formal platform for policy deliberation, financial oversight, and structured consultation. Its proceedings, recorded in Hansard and broadcast publicly, enhance transparency and accountability. However, the Council's membership is largely appointed by the Sultan, raising questions about the extent to which it fulfils the binding and obligatory dimensions of *shura*. While MMN embodies consultative practices through debates on national budgets, policies, and development priorities, its advisory status limits its capacity.[20] Scholars have noted that Brunei's institutionalisation of Islamic governance has been gradual and historically rooted. Asbol Mail documents the revival of Islamic administration in Brunei from the 1950s onward, highlighting the establishment of bodies such as the Majlis Mesyuarat Syariah (1954), Jabatan Hal Ehwal Ugama (1954), and Majlis Ugama Islam (1962), which embedded Islamic accountability into governance structures.[21] Rozan Yunos traces Islamic governance from Medina's Constitution through the Rashidun, Umayyad, and Abbasid periods, situating Brunei's sultanate within this trajectory.[22] The Islamic theory of sustainability provides another dimension to accountability by linking governance to civilizational resilience. Latiff, Yunus, and Mydin identify four fundamental principles: purification of the soul (*tazkiyatun nafs*), recognition of God's dominicality (*rububiyyah*), stewardship (*khalifah*), and responsibility on Earth (*khalifatu fil ardh*). These principles situate accountability within both spiritual and environmental domains, ensuring that governance aligns with the *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah* (protection of faith, life, intellect, lineage, and wealth).[23] Their study underscores that sustainability in Islam is inseparable from accountability, as leaders and communities are entrusted with safeguarding resources and social justice for future generations. This framework strengthens the argument that MMN's accountability practices should be evaluated not only in political terms but also in their contribution to ummah sustainability.

A similar understanding is developed by Khasani through his analysis of al-Qurṭubī's tafsīr. Drawing upon the concepts of *khilāfah*, *ʿimārat al-arḍ*, *taskhīr*, and the prohibition of *fasād*, Khasani argues that governance should be evaluated according to its ability to uphold stewardship, maintain balance, and ensure justice across generations. Sustainability therefore involves not only environmental preservation but also responsible governance, social welfare, and accountability before Allah. This perspective broadens the concept of accountability beyond procedural compliance and frames it as a

14 Khotami. (2017). The Concept of Accountability in Good Governance. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research (ASSEHR)*, 163, 30–33.

15 Arieff Salleh Rosman, Akmaliza Abdullah, Fakhrul Irfan bin Ishak, Azhar bin Jaafar, Ahmad Luqman Zulkefli. (2025). Accountability in Islamic Scripture: Foundations for a Good Governance Framework in Fiqh Watan. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science (IJRISS)*, 9(14), p.3071

16 Imam Taufiq. (2015). Transparency and Accountability in the Qur'an and Its Role in Building Good Governance. *International Journal of Business, Economics and Law*, 6(4), 73–76

17 Mohammad Eisa Ruhullah, Thameem Ushama. (2024). Tawhidic Leadership in the Modern World: Bridging Islamic Governance With Universal Values For Peace And Integrity, *Al-Shajarah*, 29(2).

18 *Ibid*.

19 Fatin Rabi'atul Adawiyah Mohammed Fareed. (2020). "The Role of Islam in the Management and Administration of Brunei Darussalam". *Jurnal Kajian Peradaban Islam, 3(2), pp45-49.*

20 Khadijah Mariah Abu Samah and Ahamad Faosiy Ogunbado. (2026). Shura as an Accountability Mechanism in Islamic Governance: Implications for Brunei Darussalam. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 10(8).*

21 Asbol Mail. (2021). Pentadbiran Islam Brunei Satu kajian kebangkitan. Paper presented at Persidangan Antarabangsa Islam di Alam Melayu, Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali.

22 Rozan Yunos. (2017). *The evolution of Islamic governance: With special reference to Brunei Darussalam*. Paper presented at the 3rd Islamic Governance Symposium, Universiti Brunei Darussalam.

23 Latiff, Yunus and Mydin, (2016). "The Theory of Sustainability from Islamic Perspective." pp. 179–183.

moral obligation embedded in the divine trust (*amānah*).[24] The relationship between accountability and sustainable governance is further emphasised by Umar and Mustapha, who identify accountability (*masʾūliyyah*) as one of the foundational principles of Islamic political thought. According to their analysis, leaders are not merely answerable to the public but ultimately accountable before Allah for the exercise of their authority. Accountability serves as a safeguard against injustice, corruption, and misuse of power while promoting public trust, social harmony, and sustainable development. Their study concludes that sustainable governance cannot be achieved without effective mechanisms of accountability because justice, welfare, and development are all dependent upon responsible leadership.[25] Recent scholarship has expanded these discussions into the context of contemporary governance and technological transformation. Rabiu et al. argue that sustainable governance should be guided by the principles of *khilāfah* (stewardship), *amānah* (trust), *mīzān* (balance), and the prohibition of *isrāf* (wastefulness). Using the framework of *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, they contend that governance institutions should not be assessed solely according to efficiency or economic performance but also according to transparency, social benefit, environmental responsibility, and long-term impact upon future generations. Their analysis highlights the continuing relevance of Islamic governance principles in responding to contemporary challenges associated with digitalisation, artificial intelligence, and sustainable development.[26]

Similarly, AbuTaleb et al. contend that governance institutions must play an active role in directing technological and social transformation through ethical accountability and public responsibility. Their framework of Islamic AI ethics stresses that decision-making processes should protect public welfare (*maṣlaḥah*), preserve human flourishing, and ensure that emerging technologies remain subject to moral and institutional oversight. The authors emphasise that accountability cannot be reduced to legal compliance but must be understood as a multidimensional obligation encompassing social, ethical, and spiritual responsibilities.[27] Taken together, Islamic scholarship positions *shūrā* and accountability as complementary foundations of sustainable governance. Accountability extends beyond administrative oversight to encompass stewardship of society, resources, and future generations, linking political authority with divine trust and social responsibility. Likewise, *shūrā* is more than a consultative formality; it functions as a mechanism for transparency, inclusivity, and collective decision-making that safeguards against arbitrary rule. Consequently, accountability within MMN should be assessed not only through its oversight functions but also through its contribution to social cohesion, institutional resilience, and the long-term sustainability of the *ummah*. In Brunei, the philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja* and the institutional role of the MMN demonstrate both the promise and the limitations of embedding *shura* in contemporary governance. While MMN provides a platform for deliberation and oversight, its advisory status highlights the gap between symbolic consultation and binding accountability. Integrating the *amanah–shura–hisāb* cycle into Brunei's governance structures offers a pathway to strengthen accountability, align governance with *maqāṣid al-sharīʿah*, and contribute to the sustainability of the *ummah.*

vi. The principle of *Amanah*

The principle of *amanah* is central to Islamic governance, signifying the sacred trust bestowed upon leaders to act with justice, integrity, and responsibility. Qur'anic injunctions such as *"Indeed, Allah commands you to render trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice"* (Qur'an 4:58) establish *amanah* as both a moral and constitutional obligation. Classical scholars like al-Mawardi emphasised that leadership is a form of stewardship (*wilayah*) entrusted by God, requiring rulers to safeguard the rights of their communities.[28] Ibn Taymiyyah reinforced this by arguing that neglecting *amanah* undermines both divine accountability and social legitimacy.[29] Philosophically, *amanah* embodies the ethical foundation of governance, binding rulers to transparency and fairness, while reminding them that authority is not ownership but a trust to be discharged faithfully.

vii. The principle of *Shura*

Shura represents the institutionalisation of collective decision-making in Islam. The Qur'an elevates consultation to a communal duty, as in Surah al-Shura (42:38): *"and those who have answer the call of their lord, and perform the salah, and who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what we have bestowed on them".* The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) consistently consulted his companions in matters of war and governance, even when divine revelation had already provided guidance, demonstrating that consultation was not symbolic but binding. Classical

24 Khasani, Fahim. (2025). *Khilāfah, Taskhīr, and Sustainability: Reconstructing Islamic Eco-Theology through Al-Qurṭubī's Tafsīr*. *ISTIFHAM: Journal of Islamic Studies*, 3(2), pp. 149-154.
25 Umar Alhaji Umar & Maina Mustapha. (2019). "The Application of Islamic Concept of Accountability in Leadership: A Means for Sustainable Development in Nigeria." *Global Academic Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 1(1), pp. 39-42.
26 Aliyu Alhaji Rabiu, SABO Jamilu Sa'idu, Abdulmumini Inda, Haulatu Yakubu Zakariya, Haruna Kawuwa, (2025). *From Khilāfah to Cloud Computing: Islamic Ecotheology, Maqāṣid al-Sharīʿah, and the Future of Sustainable AI Infrastructure* (2025), pp. 11-13.
27 Mohamed AbuTaleb, Mohammed Ansari, Kenan Alkiek, Suleiman Hani & Umer Khan. (2026). *Toward an Islamic Ethics and Fiqh of Artificial Intelligence*. Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research. pp. 7-10, 37-38.
28 Al-Mawardi. (n.d.). Al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah; Ibn Taymiyyah. (2005). The Political Shari'Ah.
29 Ibn Taymiyyah. (2005). *The Political Shari'Ah On Reforming The Ruler And The Ruled*. A. G. al-Hanafi (Trans.). Cairo: Dar al-Fiqh.

jurists debated whether *shura* was advisory or obligatory. Al-Ṣallābī argued that neglecting consultation undermines Sharīʿah legitimacy, framing *shura* as a constitutional requirement.[30] Al-Raysuni expanded its scriptural basis by showing that consultation appears across Qur'anic narratives, embedding it as a foundational social practice instituted at creation.[31] Yusuf al-Qaradawi reinforced this principle by emphasising that *shura* is a constant of Qur'anic guidance, but its format is contingent and adaptable to different social and political contexts. He argued that no ruler is permitted to abolish consultation from the life of the Muslim community, nor to impose decisions that contradict the will of the people.[32] This flexibility reflects Islam's wisdom in accommodating diverse social and political settings, allowing each society to implement *shura* in a manner suited to its conditions while preserving its obligatory nature. Philosophically, *shura* embodies inclusivity and restraint, ensuring that authority is moderated by collective wisdom. It is both procedural and existential, reflecting the indebtedness of the community to divine guidance.

viii. The principle of *Hisab*

The principle of *hisāb* situates governance within the framework of reckoning and responsibility. Qur'anic verses such as *"Then they will be informed of what they did"* (Qur'an 99:6–8) highlight accountability as inevitable, both in divine judgment and worldly oversight. Syed Naquib al-Attas interprets accountability as fundamental to *dīn*, understood as indebtedness to God. Classical scholars emphasised that leadership is not absolute but conditional upon justice and responsibility. Ibn Taymiyyah, for example, argued that rulers are accountable for every decision that affects the welfare of the community, and failure to uphold justice invalidates their legitimacy. Al-Mawardi similarly stressed that the ruler's authority is a trust (*amanah*) that must be discharged with fairness, and accountability (*hisāb*) is the mechanism through which this trust is evaluated. Modern scholarship extends this by linking *hisāb* to institutional checks and balances, situating accountability as both vertical (to higher authority) and horizontal (to society).[33] Thus, *hisāb* integrates spiritual reckoning with procedural safeguards, reinforcing the inevitability of responsibility in leadership. Together, *amanah*, *shura*, and *hisāb* form a holistic accountability cycle. *Amanah* establishes the ethical foundation of trust, *shura* institutionalises consultation and inclusivity, and *hisāb* enforces reckoning and oversight. Classical Islamic thought thus situates governance not merely as a political arrangement but as a sacred trust bound by divine and communal accountability. This integrated framework provides the foundation for analysing how Brunei's Legislative Council (MMN) embodies these principles in its structural process.

ix. Brunei Legislative Council

The constitutional evolution of Brunei's Legislative Council illustrates this tension between consultative ideals and monarchical authority. Before the 1959 Constitution, the Majlis Mesyuarat Negeri (1907) functioned as an administrative body, combining traditional Muslim officials with the British Resident, whose presence influenced governance despite not being rooted in Islamic tradition.[34] Sultan Omar 'Ali Saifuddien's dissolution of overlapping religious advisory councils in 1959 marked a deliberate restructuring, moving beyond narrowly focused bodies toward a comprehensive constitutional framework that integrated both religious and administrative governance.[35] The establishment of the Legislative Council under the 1959 Constitution introduced a broader consultative platform, including ex officio officials, nominated members, and elected representatives from district councils. However, the 1962 revolt and subsequent state of emergency suspended electoral provisions, consolidating authority under the Crown. The dissolution of the Council in 1984 further strengthened the centralization of authority, with legislative authority exercised directly by the Sultan. Its revival in 2004 was therefore significant, though largely consultative, membership was appointed, debates were reported publicly, and budgetary discussions were introduced, embedding limited participatory elements while preserving monarchical primacy.[36] Taken together, this trajectory highlights both continuity and reform. Islamic values remained central, but consultative practices were reconfigured to suit evolving administrative realities. The Legislative Council today functions less as a Western-style parliament and more as an institutionalised form of *shura* — a forum where advice and deliberation are permitted, but ultimate authority remains firmly vested in the Sultan.

x. Brunei Legislative Council as an Embodiment of the *Amanah-Shura-Hisab* Cycle

The Hansards of Brunei's Legislative Council between 2021 and 2026 reveal a structured rhythm that underscores the Council's role in governance and accountability. From 2021 to 2024, sessions were conducted as single meetings, following a consistent order: *Usul Menjunjung Titah*, *Rang Undang-Undang* (bills), *Kumpulan Wang* (budget allocations),

30 Al-Ṣallābi. (2010). Al-Shūrā Farīḍah Islāmiyyah.
31 Al-Raysuni. (2011). Al-Shura.
32 Al-Qaradawi. (2010). *Islam An Introduction.* Syed Bashir Ahmad Kashmiri (Trans.). Kuala Lumpur: Islamic Book Trust.p219-220
33 Erkkilä, T. (2007). Governance and Accountability.
34 Pengiran Mohammad Pengiran Abd. Rahman. (2007). *Islam di Brunei Darussalam Zaman British (1774-1984)*. Brunei: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka. P157
35 Horton, A. V. M. (2005). Brunei in 2004: Window-dressing an Islamizing Sultanate. *Asian Survey, 45*(1), pp180–185.p181
36 Hj Mohd Yusop Hj Damit. (2007). Brunei Darussalam: Towards a new era. In *Southeast Asian Affairs 2007*. ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Pertanyaan (questions), *Kenyataan* (ministerial statements), and *Penangguhan* (adjournment).[37] In 2025, His Majesty Sultan Haji Hassanal Bolkiah consented for the Council to convene twice yearly, inaugurating *Mesyuarat Pertama* and *Mesyuarat Kedua*. This procedural evolution institutionalised a two-phase accountability cycle: fiscal and legislative approval in the First Meeting, and structured consultation and scrutiny in the Second Meeting. [38] This recurring rhythm of preparation, deliberation, and evaluation is not merely procedural. Rather, it reflects the institutional embodiment of *amānah*, *shūrā*, and *hisāb* within Brunei Darussalam's constitutional framework. Together, these principles form a continuous governance cycle in which authority is entrusted, deliberated collectively, and ultimately subjected to accountability.

- ***Amanah***

The Council demonstrates its entrusted duty to safeguard public welfare and ensure ministers are answerable to the people. The Sultan's role as guardian of this process, alongside appointed members, illustrates how *amanah* is institutionalised: leadership is a trust from Allah, discharged through structured representation and stewardship. In the 17th Session (2021), the Hansard records the beginning with the *Usul Menjunjung Titah*, whereby members expressed support for the Royal Address and reaffirmed their commitment to implementing national priorities and reflecting entrusted responsibility in governance. This demonstrates that leadership is treated as a trust from Allah, discharged through structured representation. In the 18th Session (2022)**,** the agenda opened with deliberations on the Supply Bill (*Rang Undang-Undang Perbekalan*), where members scrutinised budget allocations and ministerial programmes before approving public expenditure and highlighting the Council's duty to safeguard national resources through fiscal stewardship. The process reflected a shared responsibility to ensure that fiscal allocations supported the welfare of citizens and the nation's long-term development. Similar patterns emerged during the 19th Session (2023)**,** members were entrusted to raise economic concerns, compelling ministers to justify policies in real time, further reinforcing the Council's role as guardian of public welfare. A significant development occurred in the 21st Session (2025), when His Majesty consented to convene two meetings annually. The First Meeting focused on primarily on legislation and budget deliberation, while the Second Meeting institutionalised consultation, dedicated to questions, ministerial statements, and follow-up discussions showing how *amanah* was expanded to ensure governance remained transparent and responsive. Finally, in the 22nd Session (2026)**,** the Hansard documented the structured agenda and adjournment, confirming that the entrusted responsibility to organise proceedings and safeguard welfare continues to be upheld. Across these sessions, *amanah* is not abstract but concretely operationalised through agenda setting, fiscal oversight, and stewardship of national priorities.

- ***Shura***

The principle of *shura* is embodied in the deliberative stages of the Legislative Council, particularly oral questions, ministerial responses, supplementary inquiries, debates, and policy discussions. These mechanisms institutionalise consultation and provide a formal platform through which members may raise societal concerns and seek clarification on government policies and programmes. In the 18th Session (2022), members scrutinised fiscal policy during debates on the Supply Bill, demonstrating how consultation is embedded within legislative and budgetary processes. By the 19th Session (2023), ministers were compelled to justify economic policies supporting small and medium enterprises, demonstrating real-time consultation and participatory governance. A major development occurred in the Second Meeting of the 21st Session (August 2025), which was explicitly dedicated to *Pertanyaan*, *Kenyataan Menteri*, and *Usul-Usul*. This institutionalised structured space for members to raise issues on welfare, employment, and development, compelling ministers to respond in detail. The 22nd Session (2026) continued this rhythm, with members raising concerns on diversification and social welfare, showing that consultation was not symbolic but embedded into legislative practice. The Hansards therefore demonstrate that *shūrā* within MMN is operationalised through structured questioning, deliberation, and policy scrutiny. The Council provides a forum through which public concerns may be articulated, debated, and communicated to government agencies, thereby promoting participation, responsiveness, and collective decision-making within governance processes.

- ***Hisab***

The principle of *hisab* is reflected in the closure and reckoning stages of the Council's proceedings. Within Islamic governance, *hisāb* extends beyond the recording of decisions and encompasses the obligation of public authorities to justify their actions, account for their performance, and remain answerable to both society and Allah. Analysis of the Hansards reveals that accountability is embedded throughout MMN's proceedings through budget scrutiny, ministerial explanations, supplementary questions, written responses, and formal documentation. In the 17th Session (2021), ministers were required

37 Majlis Mesyuarat Negara, *Penyata Rasmi Majlis Mesyuarat Negara: Mesyuarat Pertama, Musim Permesyuaratan Ke-17*, Bandar Seri Begawan: Jabatan Cetak Kerajaan, 2021.
38 Jabatan Majlis-Majlis Mesyuarat, *Mesyuarat Kedua Dari Musim Permesyuaratan Ke-21 MMN*, Bandar Seri Begawan: Jabatan Majlis-Majlis Mesyuarat, 1 July 2025, available at: https://www.majlis-mesyuarat.gov.bn/01-07-25-mesyuarat-kedua-dari-musim-permesyuaratan-ke-21-mmn/

to justify budget allocations and explain policies relating to employment, welfare, healthcare, education, and economic development before expenditure was approved. The unanimous approval of the Supply Bill was recorded, demonstrating collective responsibility and transparent decision-making, but the accountability dimension lay in the detailed scrutiny that preceded approval. Members questioned implementation plans, expenditure priorities, and expected outcomes, demonstrating that public expenditure was subject to review and justification. The 19th Session (2023) documented written answers appended to Hansards, where questions that could not be answered during deliberations were formally addressed in writing and incorporated into the official record. This ensured that ministerial commitments remained publicly accessible and subject to future review, reinforcing the principle that public officials remain answerable beyond the parliamentary chamber. Next, in the 20th Session (2024) provides particularly strong evidence of *hisāb* in practice. During deliberations involving the Ministry of Education, members questioned the effectiveness of digital education initiatives such as the Learning Management System (LMS), Smart Classroom programmes, graduate employability initiatives, and workforce development strategies. Ministers were required to provide performance data, explain implementation mechanisms, and outline measures used to assess outcomes. Members also sought clarification regarding literacy and numeracy performance, scholarship effectiveness, labour market alignment, and progress towards Wawasan Brunei 2035 targets. These discussions demonstrate that accountability within MMN increasingly emphasises measurable outcomes, performance indicators, and impact assessment rather than merely procedural compliance.

In the 21st Session (2025), the two-phase cycle institutionalised accountability more deeply: the First Meeting emphasised fiscal approval, while the Second Meeting compelled ministers to respond to detailed questions, embedding continuous scrutiny. The 22nd Session (2026) noted adjournment and continuation dates, ensuring transparency in closure and continuity of governance. Budget deliberations across these years, with line-by-line examination of allocations, further highlight *hisab* as institutionalised accountability, ministers must justify expenditures, and members raise concerns on welfare, employment, and diversification. This dual dimension of accountability, vertical to God and horizontal toward society can be observed in the Council's proceedings, suggesting that *hisab* is expressed in practical terms rather than remaining purely theoretical. Overall, the findings demonstrate that *amānah*, *shūrā*, and *hisāb* do not operate independently but form an integrated governance cycle. *Amānah* establishes authority as a trust, *shūrā* provides the mechanism through which that trust is deliberated collectively, and *hisāb* ensures that decisions and actions remain subject to review and accountability. The evolution of MMN between 2021 and 2026, particularly the introduction of the two-phase sitting arrangement in 2025, illustrates a growing institutional commitment to consultation, transparency, and accountability. As such, the Council represents a contemporary manifestation of Islamic consultative governance in which entrusted authority is exercised through deliberation and subjected to continuous scrutiny in pursuit of public welfare and good governance.

xi. Ummah sustainability

Analysis of the Hansards of the Majlis Mesyuarat Negara (MMN) from 2021 to 2026 indicates that the Council's consultative practices contribute to ummah sustainability by embedding the Islamic principles of *amānah*, *shūrā*, and *hisāb* within governance processes. In Islamic thought, sustainability is not confined to environmental preservation or economic development but encompasses the holistic flourishing of the community across spiritual, social, economic, civilisational, and environmental dimensions. Latiff et al. identify four foundational principles of Islamic sustainability, namely *tazkiyatun nafs* (purification of the soul), *rububiyyah* (recognition of God's dominicality), *khilāfah* (stewardship), and *khalīfatu fil arḍ* (human responsibility as vicegerent on earth).[39] Analysis of the MMN Hansards suggests that these principles are operationalised through the Council's consultative processes. The preparatory stage, represented by the *Usul Menjunjung Titah*, reflects *amānah* as entrusted responsibility and aligns closely with the principle of *rububiyyah* by situating governance within a framework of divine accountability. The annual Royal Address establishes national priorities while emphasising moral responsibility, public service, and commitment to the welfare of the nation. Members responding during the motion of thanks frequently reaffirm these responsibilities, demonstrating an understanding of governance as a trust rather than merely an administrative function.[40]

The deliberative stage, characterised by oral questions, supplementary inquiries, ministerial explanations, and policy debates, constitutes the practical expression of *shūrā*. Analysis of the Hansards reveals consistent engagement on issues relating to public expenditure, healthcare, education, employment, social welfare, infrastructure, and national development. Through these deliberations, ministers are required to justify decisions and explain policy outcomes, thereby promoting transparency and collective participation. Beyond procedural consultation, this process also nurtures *tazkiyatun nafs* by cultivating discipline, humility, responsiveness, and a sense of responsibility among members and public officials.[41] The closure stage, reflected through ministerial commitments, voting procedures, adjournments, and officially recorded decisions, embodies the principle of *hisāb*. Decisions are formally documented, responses are placed on public record, and

39 Latiff, Yunus and Mydin, (2016). "The Theory of Sustainability from Islamic Perspective." pp. 179–183.
40 Umar and Mustapha, "The Application of Islamic Concept of Accountability in Leadership," pp. 39–41.
41 Umar and Mustapha, "The Application of Islamic Concept of Accountability in Leadership," pp. 40–42.; Mohamed AbuTaleb, Mohammed Ansari, Kenan Alkiek, Suleiman Hani and Umer Khan, *Toward an Islamic Ethics and Fiqh of Artificial Intelligence* (Yaqeen Institute for Islamic Research, 2026), 7–10.

government agencies become answerable for commitments made during deliberations. This reinforces accountability both vertically before Allah and horizontally before society. In this respect, the closure stage corresponds with the principle of *khilāfah*, whereby authority is exercised as stewardship on behalf of the community.[42] The findings further demonstrate that MMN contributes to *ummah* sustainability across several interrelated dimensions. Spiritually, deliberations conducted within the framework of *Melayu Islam Beraja* reinforce Islamic identity and moral responsibility. Socially, structured consultation enables diverse concerns to be raised and discussed, strengthening public trust and social cohesion. Economically, scrutiny of government expenditure, development projects, and ministerial allocations promotes responsible management of national resources and long-term resilience. Civilisationally, the introduction of the two-phase consultative cycle in 2025 demonstrates institutional adaptability while preserving established consultative traditions. Environmentally, although less directly emphasised, discussions concerning development planning, public welfare, infrastructure, and resource allocation reflect an underlying concern with stewardship (*khilāfah*) and balance (*mīzān*) in the management of national resources.[43]

Taken as a whole, MMN's consultative practices illustrate how Islamic governance principles can contribute to the long-term resilience of the *ummah*. The institutionalisation of an *amānah-shūrā-hisāb* cycle provides a framework through which governance is aligned with Islamic ethical principles while responding to contemporary social, economic, and developmental challenges. Although MMN's constitutional role remains primarily advisory, its consultative functions nevertheless contribute to accountability, institutional legitimacy, social cohesion, and the broader sustainability of Brunei Darussalam's Muslim community.[44]

xii. Conclusion

This study has examined how MMN functions as a consultative accountability mechanism within the philosophy of *Melayu Islam Beraja*. Analysis of the Hansard records from 2021 to 2026 shows that MMN functions as an institutional mechanism through which consultation, scrutiny, and public accountability are incorporated into governance processes and demonstrates how these values are preserved and adapted in contemporary institutional practice. The findings show that the consultative cycle begins with *amānah* in the preparatory stage, is operationalised through *shūrā* during deliberative proceedings, and culminates in *hisāb* through ministerial responses, recorded decisions, and institutional answerability. Viewed collectively, these consultative practices contribute to the sustainability of the *ummah* across spiritual, social, economic, civilizational, and environmental dimensions. They nurture Islamic identity, strengthen community bonds, safeguard resources, and demonstrate adaptability to modern governance challenges. Through the lens of the *amānah-shūrā-hisāb* framework, this study argues that accountability within MMN should not be understood solely as oversight of government actions but as part of a broader process of sustaining the well-being and resilience of the *ummah*. Although MMN's advisory status and appointment-based membership may influence the shape of representation, its institutional design nonetheless preserves ethical accountability and stability within Brunei's governance framework. In this way, MMN demonstrates how Islamic governance principles may be embedded procedurally to help sustain civilisational continuity. The institutionalisation of *shura* within Brunei's legislative process not only sustains the accountability cycle of *amanah–shura–hisāb* but also offers insights into how consultative governance can support the resilience and sustainability of the *ummah* in the modern era.

xiii. References

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42 Umar and Mustapha, "The Application of Islamic Concept of Accountability in Leadership," 40–42.
43Rabiu et al. (2025). From Khilāfah to Cloud Computing, pp. 11–13, 22–23; Khasani. (2025). "Khilāfah, Taskhīr, and Sustainability", pp 151–154.
44 Rabiu *et al*., *From Khilāfah to Cloud Computing*, 22–23; Mohamed AbuTaleb *et al*., *Toward an Islamic Ethics and Fiqh of Artificial Intelligence*, 37–38.

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