The Howdh (Pond) in terms of the Shari'ah

Answer: A Howdh (pond) is being constructed at the Masjid here. According to the books of Fiqh, the Howdh in terms of the Shari'ah should measure ten by ten Dhiraa, which has been interpreted as 10x10 arm's lengths. The question is what is meant by the Dhiraa and the arm's length? The people building the Masjid have asked me about this and I told them that it refers to 10x10 arm's lengths. They received the same reply when they asked for Fataawaa from others.

They have now measured an arm's length to be 1.5 feet. As a result, the Howdh measures 15 feet by 15 feet, giving a total area of 225 square feet.

When they started construction by this measure, someone objected that the pond seems too small. The people therefore approached me again and I again researched the issue. I saw that according to Hadhrat Mufti kifaytullaah RAH.'s Taleemul Islaam, the Dhiraa equals 21 and a quarter inches. This means that the arm's length will also be equals 21 and a quarter inches, whereas it is commonly understood to equal 18 inches. Now if we calculate the area of the pond by this measure, the total area will equal 275 square feet. The question therefore is: what is meant by the Dhiraa and the arm's length? Is it 1.5 feet or 27.25 inches?

Answer: There is a difference of opinion amongst the scholars with regard to the Dhiraa measure. Most scholars have defined it as six Qabadhaat, which adds up to 1.5 feet.

The Howdh that has been built is therefore classified as one in terms of the Shari'ah. If there is room, it will be better to make it larger to fit the description stated in Ta'leemul Islaam. This would be best in the interests of caution and to avoid conflict. And Allaah knows best what is most correct.

Fatawa Rahimiyyah vol.2