

## AFRICA FEDERATION PAYS OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSION IN DAR ES SALAAM

In keeping with the objectives of maintaining and developing external relationships, a delegation of the Africa Federation paid an official visit to the Indian High Commission in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania on Friday, 20<sup>th</sup> December 2013.

The delegation headed by the Chairman of Africa Federation, Alhaj Anwarali Dharamsi, included Hon. Secretary, Aunali Khalfan, Hon. Treasurer, Mohamed Hemani, Assistant Hon. Secretary, Kumail Manji and Mr. Shiraz Rashid, a prominent member of our community in Dar es Salaam who accompanied the AFED delegation. They were warmly received by His Excellency Debnath Shaw, the High Commissioner of India to Tanzania at his office, along Kinondoni Road in Dar es Salaam.

His Excellency, Mr. Debnath Shaw was appointed High Commissioner of India to Tanzania and joined the Indian Mission in Dar es Salaam on 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2012; he took over from former Indian High Commissioner to Tanzania, His Excellency, Mr. K. V. Bhagirath.

Alhaj Anwarali expressed his appreciation to His Excellency on behalf of the Federation of KSI Jamaats of Africa for the warm welcome. He then gave a concise history of the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri community in Africa, covering the first migration of Khojas and other Gujarati Indians to East Africa, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia and Congo from the 1850's, majority of migrants were from Cutch Bhuj, Ahmedabad, Hariyana and Porebunder who ventured and started exploring settlement prospects in Africa. Anwarali Bhai further pointed out that the population of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheris presently is about 140,000 and spread over five continents.

The AFED Chairman mentioned to the High Commissioner on the Commerce, Industry and the Small Scale Industry which our community members are involved in many parts of Africa, and he stressed that there is a lot to learn from their counterparts in India.



The AFED delegation in discussion with His Excellency, the High Commissioner of India to Tanzania in his office in Dar es Salaam.



AFED Chairman presents to His Excellency the historical book titled **"The Endangered Species"** written by our community member, Alhaj Hassan Ali M. Jaffer of Mombasa, Kenya.

The High Commissioner was briefed on the Documentary Film – *"The Khoja - A Journey of Faith"* being developed and produced by the Mulla Asghar Memorial Library & Islamic Resource Centre, Toronto, Canada. His Excellency expressed keen interest when he was briefed about this project which is being undertaken by our community.

The delegation explained the rationale for the documentary film which is to demonstrate how the Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Community has developed, and to convey to the future generations to glean an understanding and appreciation of their ancestors' struggles, trials, tribulations as well to convey a message that without firm adherence to faith and its Islamic culture and values, the Community would not have survived, as we witness today.

The High Commissioner was also briefed on the structure and operations of the Federation and on the religious, economic, social and humanitarian services being offered by our community where the community Centres (Jamaats) are established. A brief outline was given on the healthcare and medical referral services which are provided by the Central Health Board (CHB) of the Federation of Khoja Shia Ithna-Asheri Jamaats of Africa in association with some hospitals and medical institutes in Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Bangalore and Manipal, for many years, the CHB have close association with these hospitals and institutions in India.

He was also briefed on the Higher Education portfolio and the current number of students pursuing degree courses in India, mostly in Manipal where number of students increases each year, the Education Board (EB) of the Africa Federation has facilitated and provided a Centre for the students for the purpose of social functions and religious congregations. Currently there are about 50 students of both genders from our Jamaats in Africa who are studying in India.

The High Commissioner responding to a point about the new system introduced recently for the Indian Visas, he explained on the need for a change in the system, which he said was a global requirement introduced by the Indian Government. However, he explained that on-line application introduced recently in Tanzania is a simple and straight forward process to apply, however applicants should apply at least two weeks in advance of travel to India. On the question of emergency and serious medical cases, the High Commissioner responded that the Indian High Commission have special arrangements and considerations for such cases, like finger printing for a stretcher case etc.



His Excellency, the Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Debnath Shaw responding to a point raised by the Hon. Treasurer of AFED, Alhaj Mohamed Hemani. Looking on is the AFED Chairman, Alhaj Anwarali Dharamsi and the Assistant Hon. Secretary, Alhaj Kumail Manji.

The Higher Commissioner also explained the procedure regarding the PIO Card. Later, the AFED delegation met with the Consular Officer responsible for PIO Card processing, and the following information was obtained (also more details available on their Website)

### **Person of Indian Origin (PIO)**

The new PIO Card Scheme, 2002, is in operation since 15<sup>th</sup> September, 2002. All persons of Indian origin who are in possession of the passport of any other country except Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, China, Sri Lanka or any other country specified by the government, are eligible for PIO Card if:

1. He/She had any time held an Indian passport.
2. He/She or either of his/her parents or grand parents or great grand parents was born in India or permanent resident in India provided neither was at any time a citizen of any other specific country.
3. He/She is a spouse of a citizen of India or a person of Indian origin covered under 1 & 2 above.
4. Iranian nationals of Indian Origin can be granted PIO card after MHA approval.

One of the several benefits available to PIO Card Holders is that a PIO card holder shall not require a separate VISA to visit India. The card is valid for 15 years.





Standing from left: Shiraz Rashid, Aunali Khalfan, His Excellency, Indian High Commissioner, Mr. Debnath Shaw, Anwarali Dharamsi, Mohamed Hemani and Kumail Manji,

## **Secretariat**