

INSIGHT


THE
WORLD
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OF KHOJA SHIA ITHNA-ASHERI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES

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Reflecting on our Communities' Achievements

The believer is harder than a mountain, for the mountain is dispensable whereas nothing can be taken away from his religion. Imam al-Baqir (as)



Editorial

Salaamun Alaykum,

Ambition to achieve has been a key focus of our local communities across the globe and the desire to do our utmost to improve, uplift and propagate our message to the masses has been at the forefront of each region. With the focus of our community on change throughout the world, whether it is the new committees, new projects or new ambitions, it is important to reflect on the changes that were brought forward and the ideas that were implemented previously.

With this in mind, this issue of Insight is dedicated to reflecting on our communities' achievements throughout the world in each region.

The variety of projects demonstrated by our vibrant communities demonstrates the amazing spirit found in each part of our community - whether it is through the launch of KHOJA TV in Reunion Island, the Job Interview Day in Mombasa or the interfaith events in Toronto, Australia and Stanmore (London). You will be able to read about the high profile visit with Tony Blair, the housing project in Hangu - Pakistan, and the ingenious way that Seattle combined religion with carpentry.

The editorial team would like your input on what should be included in future issues of Insight. Let us know if you want more or less of particular content and tell us how useful you find these publications. We would appreciate if you could use the link on www.world-federation.org.

Finally, the editorial team is looking to include articles written by its readers, so if you wish to share your stories of success or achievement to the global community by having your articles published, please send them to **communications@world-federation.org** before 31 July 2010.

Hasnain Ramji
Insight Editor



Regional News

THE AFRICA FEDERATION

The achievements of the local jamaats of The Africa Federation are numerous and varied. Our local communities have been inspired to find solutions to financial difficulties which are found so commonly throughout the region; one such idea was the JIBA Business Loan Scheme, to allow easier access to funds for local businesses. One of our main objectives is to facilitate the development of our local communities and these projects are just some of the ways by which this is being done throughout Africa. We hope to keep going with these and all projects in all aspects of our regions needs.

Editor: *"Details of another money saving idea thought up in Dar es Salaam, the Mabrook card, can be found on page 7."*

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPEAN JAMAATS

The Council of European Jamaats has always had an ecliptic range of ventures that are aimed to benefit our European locals and the global community at large. Our strength comes from the strong minded and dedicated members who work hard at a local level to achieve a greater reward to those in more need. A prime example of this comes from the numerous fund raising events held throughout the region, organized to raise funds for a variety of projects. This propagation of collections isn't limited to money but also spreads to knowledge which was delivered to the public at the numerous interfaith events being held.

Editor: *"A gathering of a different kind, where the youth of Wessex 'brought a friend' to the meet the Jamaat; read more on page 14."*

NORTH AMERICAN SHIA ITHNA-ASHERI MUSLIM COMMUNITIES ORGANIZATION

Our mission at NASIMCO is to harness talents and resources available within our communities for the greater good of global humanity and our communities. This has recently been demonstrated through our exemplary initiatives such as the ongoing 'Leadership Development Program'. Valuable lessons for success and growth in family, community, workplace, and government spheres are professionally taught and learned in local communities during the programs. This is one of many examples where the North American communities, together with NASIMCO, have demonstrated their dedication to serving. Despite the great number of achievements within the region, we always strive to continue and improve in the years to come.

Editor: *"Read about the 'Out of the Cold Program' on page 11 and some of the other achievements from our North American communities throughout this issue."*





'M'egg a Difference Campaign for ZCSS Stanmore, London



The original school in Gopalpur, with its run down building and furniture.

To help instill the importance of charity and giving in the hearts and minds of the youth, the Shia Ithna Asheri Madressa (SIM) Cares launched the 'M-egg A Difference' drive in June 2008. SIM Cares challenged students to fill Cadbury Mini Egg tubes with £1 coins to help raise funds for the Zainabiya Child Sponsorship Scheme (ZCSS).

Students rose to the challenge. The children came up with unique and innovative ways to raise money. Some offered to recite surahs for the thawab of marhumeen in exchange for a donation, while others got involved in sponsored bike rides, cake sales, car washes and penalty shoot-outs. At the end of four weeks of fundraising, over £3,000 GBP was collected - a fantastic achievement.

The funds raised were donated to the ZCSS's school in Gopalpur, Bihar (India) where education was provided at no charge for children from deprived families.

Bibi Fatima (AS) Camp Orlando, Florida

In June 2009, The Hussein Islamic Center of Orlando, Florida held a four day camp for the children of the community. The focus of the camp was Bibi Fatima (AS).

The children learned about the life of this great lady, including the story of Hadith-e-Kisa and participated in arts, crafts and crochet activities.





Launch of KHOJATV Reunion Island

In May 2008, KHOJATV (www.worldtv.com/khojatv) was launched in Reunion Island. Catering to individuals of all ages and backgrounds, this channel aims to bring a wealth of knowledge and faith into every Shia home.

This channel is not a Hetizian or a satellite classical television channel, instead it uses internet technology to send video files between a multimedia player box connected to both the family television set and the internet. The video files then play one after another from the internet to the TV.

KHOJATV features exclusive programmes including Quran recitation, hadiths, majalises, marsiyas, nawhas and qasidas, lectures, duas, tales and stories, cartoons, former and recent jamaat programmes, madressa courses and so on.

Most of the original programmes are in Urdu, Arabic, English, Farsi, and Gujrati, but all have French subtitles so that every viewer can understand what is being said. This also gives the opportunity to understand and practice the mother-tongue of Gujrati, which is diminishing in the new generation.

KHOJATV has been described as a 'a breath of fresh air' for the sick, the disabled and the elderly who are bored in their homes and sometimes cannot take part in the social community life.

Dearborn Tableegh Trip - Toronto, Canada



Islamic Centre of America - Dearborn, Michigan

On 21 March 2009, the Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat of Toronto's (ISIJ) Tableegh Board organised an adventure trip to Dearborn, Michigan (USA). The purpose of this trip was to promote brotherhood and unity with various communities in North America.

The group comprised 336 people of all ages, ranging from toddlers to the elderly.

The itinerary included visiting the Islamic Centre of America, the Arab American National Museum and watching the inspiration IMAX movie, "Journey to Mecca".

Many community leaders travelled to Dearborn including Br. Gulamabbas Najafi (NASIMCO Vice President), Br. Asgher Dhirani (ISIJ-Toronto Vice Chair), Br. Mohammed Molidina (Razavi Jamaat-Hamilton Jamaat Chair), Br. Shahid Juma (ISIJ Tableegh Board Secretary), Sr. Shirinbai Sumar (Senior Citizens group leader) and many others from the USA and Canada.

KHOJA
télévision



Fruity Friday Peterborough, UK

Al-Ghadeer Library Project – London, UK



In May 2009, the youth and children of the Husaini Islamic Centre organised “Fruity Friday”, a fundraising event to help raise funds and awareness for the World Cancer Research Fund.

In addition, to encourage children to take on reading as a hobby, more than 20 people turned up dressed in yellow and enjoyed watching ‘BFG’, a film based on the book by Ronald Dahl.

After the Friday prayers, the youth and other members of the community held a bucket collection and raised an additional £500.

Facilitator of the group, Sukaina Manji said, *“Cancer is something that affects many individuals and it is our duty to help raise its awareness so that people suffering do not feel isolated.”*

President of the Islamic Centre, Mohammed Nanji added, *“By supporting such charities, we are doing our human duty and contributing positively.”*

Resident Aalim of the mosque, Mullah Muhammad Kasamali said, *“It is very important to think about others and giving charity to support good causes. The collection that was held reflects this.”*

The Al-Ghadeer Library Project, running under the Islamic Cultural Affairs committee of The Council of European Jamaats involved people from various Jamaats donating the cost for books offered to institutions such as prisons, hospitals and public libraries. This was an attempt to spread the message of the Ahlul Bayt (AS) to the host communities. Each package included a set of books that had been carefully selected to give a balanced theoretical and practical overview to the Shia faith. Some of these books included:

- The Koran Translation (Tahrike Tarsile)
- Peak of eloquence (Nahjul Balagha)
- Discovering Shiaism in Islam (Shaikh Shomali)
- Pearls of Wisdom (Marhum Mulla Asghar)
- Jesus on Ethics (The World Federation)

In November 2008, letters were sent to various universities and libraries across the United Kingdom. As a result, 20 Al-Ghadeer packages were sent to universities and 17 to libraries. Those institutions that did not accept the books did acknowledge the letter and asked for more information. Moreover, several requests from various youth groups in Europe have also been received.

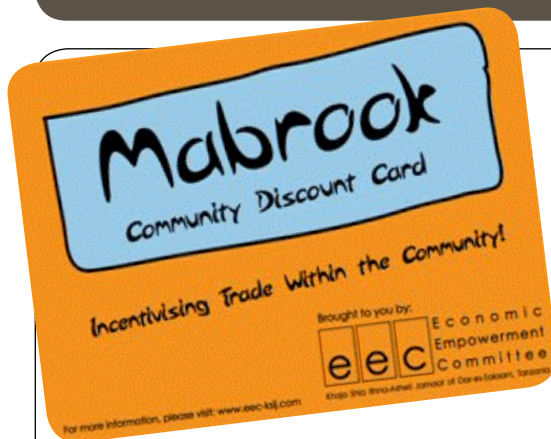
In 2009, more letters were sent to prisons and UK hospitals. The letters generated much interest, especially from the chaplaincies enquiring if they are limited to only one set of books. More than 16 book sets were sent to hospitals and more than 13 to prisons. To take this project to a higher level, a database of more than 3,000 schools and colleges across the UK was prepared. Letters and book sets have been widely distributed and many more are still being sent.

This project has since spread to various organisations in Europe and Africa. Recently, multi-faith rooms in UK airports have expressed interest in displaying these books. CoEJ hopes to continue fundraising and distributing books for years to come.



Mabrook Community Discount Card

Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania



In December 2009, The Economic Empowerment Committee (EEC) of the KSI Jamaat of Dar-es-Salaam launched the Mabrook Discount Card. The purpose of the card was to promote businesses including home-based businesses within the community.

The card allows the cardholder to avail discounts from participating community businesses. Discounts include 5% off regular prices, Buy 2 get 1 free, and 10% off special items or any other promotions that may attract community cardholders.

The Economic Empowerment Committee of the Khoja Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat of Dar-es-Salaam commented: *"Alhamdulillah, the community in Dar-es-Salaam loved the idea of using our large numbers to increase trade within the community through a community discount card. Within the first two days, we have had confirmations of participation from over sixty businesses, both small and large, and across all industries, with more registering everyday. We pray that this card is a success, and that the community businesses benefit from it. Then we can truly say MABROOK!"*

Job Interview Day

Mombasa, Kenya

Form 6 students from the Jaffery Academy had an opportunity to be one step ahead of their future competition by participating in a Job Interview Day on 14 February 2009.

Accomplished men and women in their various respective professional fields held mock interviews for the students who were sitting 'A' level exams next term and completing secondary school. After these interviews, a review session was held where the students were provided with feedback and general observations by the interviewers.

The audience included the Headmistress, career teachers and Form 6 students. This practical experience was followed by training on job hunting. Students were taught how to write their CV and draft application letters. The interviews served as a means to assess each student and help them determine their own strengths and weaknesses, and determine specific career path goals.





Mosaic Group Interfaith Event

Toronto, Canada

On 22 February 2009, the Tabligh Board of the the Jaffari Islamic community of Toronto hosted the Mosaic Group interfaith event. This initiative is an opportunity for diverse communities to network with one another in the Greater Toronto area. Community members shared their strength and history to understand justice and patience in today's society.

In Islam, one's spiritual growth involves working together with acceptance of social responsibilities and collaboration. Moreover, sharing knowledge about Islam is a responsibility of all Muslims.

The strength of all Shias is established from the sacrifices of Imam Husayn (AS) and his family. While sharing our religious history, the speakers defined the true Islamic teachings on jihad and sacrifice. The group had the opportunity to network to find similarities in religious teachings, and shared insight in the potency of Islamic beliefs. Several guests saw the advertisement in the local newspaper and were drawn to come to the ISIJ mosque for the first time.

A thought provoking presentation by Maulana Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi provided an insight and reflection to the events of Kerbala and the

sacrifices of Imam Husayn (AS), his family and his companions.

The Mosaic Group has been in existence for almost 30 years and is actively involved in promoting 'understanding' among various faiths in Canada, especially in Ontario. The organisation was originally initiated by a Christian group; later, the Jewish Temple Har Zion and the Jaffari Islamic Centre began participating in an active way. Currently, there are several organisations representing Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Zoroastrianism who paint the complete picture of this Mosaic.

Several people from the Zion Temple, the United Church and other places of worship attended this event.

Many individuals commented, *'We need to know more of Imam Husayn (AS) as a leader, man and his stand on social justice.'*

While reflecting on the historical sacrifices that established social justice some 1400 years ago, there was a consensus among the participants that in today's society we all need connections to achieve peace and harmony.





Interfaith Dialogue Sydney, Australia



**Shaykh Arif Abdulhussein speaking
to Reverend Dr. John Squires**

In continuing to foster good relationships with other faiths, the Imam Hasan Centre and the Al Mahdi Institute in conjunction with Charles Stuart University Theology Centre organised an interfaith event in Sydney, Australia to celebrate the birthday of the Holy Prophet (S) of Islam in March 2009.

Shaykh Arif Abdulhussein was the guest speaker and Reverend Dr. John Squires spoke on behalf the Charles Stuart University. The topic of discussion was 'Exploring the Humanity of Jesus and Prophet Muhammad (S)'.

The event was a great success, with almost 300 people in attendance.



Welcoming RAF Peterborough, UK



RAF servicemen and women observing hijab

To foster relationships within the community, the Peterborough Jamaat invited the Royal Air Force (RAF) servicemen and women to their centre on 11 March 2009.

With service in Iraq and Afghanistan still fresh in their minds, more than 30 personnel spent an afternoon enhancing their cultural awareness and understanding of Islam. To add to their experience, the female personnel wore the hijab.

RAF was welcomed by Mullah Muhammad Kasamali, who said that the visit was an exciting and positive opportunity, and he hoped Peterborough would inspire other communities by example. He said, *"Everyone has different opinions about the troops being sent to Afghanistan and Iraq, but I am sure that the Government wouldn't put their lives in danger if they didn't feel it was necessary."*

Wing Commander Roger Simon said, *"The visit was a fantastic opportunity to develop our understanding of the community in which we live and work. We are very grateful for the support we receive from the Peterborough community"*

The visit was a success and strengthened the bond among community members.



Interfaith Husayn Day

Stanmore, London



On 22 February 2010, the Hujjat Jamaat in Stanmore held their 2nd Annual Interfaith Husayn Day. The success of last year's event was reflected in the increased turnout with over 900 people in the audience and a further 200 listeners online.

The theme selected for the programme was centered around Imam Husayn's (AS) final words in Karbala, "*Hal min nasirin yansuruna*" (Is there anyone to help us?). The need for Muslims to answer this call to humanity was discussed as a means to combat four of the most pertinent contemporary problems facing the world today:

- Moral Depravity
- Education Poverty
- Emotional Poverty
- Spiritual emptiness

Many dignitaries participated in the event including Iran's ambassador to the UK - His Excellency Rassul Movahedian, the representative of Ayatullah Sistani - Syed Murtadha Kashmiri, the MP for Harrow East - Tony McNulty, and the leader of Harrow Council - Councillor Ashton.

Interfaith Husayn Day comprised of the following:

- Recitation of the Holy Quran
- Welcome address by Jamaat President, Al-Hajj Kamruddin Khaki
- Introduction to Imam Husayn (AS)
- Human rights

- Struggle for justice
- Is there anyone to help us?
- Masa'ib of Ali Asghar (AS)

"Many, many thanks to you all at the Husaini Centre for the wonderful Husayn Day Programme. I was wrapped up in all the presentations and panels from which you could learn so much. The "goodie" bag provided much excellent in-depth reading and information to follow the programme and I am very grateful to you, as ever, for all the knowledge and inspiration. Then on top of that was the tremendously friendly welcome and hospitality. You must be the best hostesses in London, nay in the UK."

With greetings of peace,
Pat Stevens

"Congratulations on an ABSOLUTELY brilliant event!! I can say that without a shadow of doubt, this WAS the most effective and BEST event that I have attended in the 45 years that I have lived in the UK. I say this with great sincerity and pray to the Almighty to shower his rewards in this life and the hereafter upon all those in the Jamaat who worked so hard to make the Husayn Day the success it was. ILTIMAAS DUA."

Hashim Nawrozzadeh,
The Imam Hussein Foundation





Gaza Fund Collection Birmingham, UK

In an effort to raise funds for the victims of the Gaza conflict the Abbasi Youth Committee of the KSIMC Birmingham in conjunction with The World Federation of KSIMC and The Council of European Jamaats organised the Birmingham Street Collection held on 28 February and 1 March 2009.

A group of 89 eager volunteers took the streets with simple buckets to reach a goal of £5,000 for victims of the Gaza conflict in order to provide them with much needed food and medicine supplies.

It was heart-warming to see that children were among those who donated the most in the donation tins provided. Even the homeless, who were also out on the streets selling their magazines gave all that they could.

The youth raised a grand total of £6,900 over two days. The money collected was sent to Gaza through The World Federation, working with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) to provide relief to the people of the region.



Out of the Cold Toronto, Canada

For the tenth consecutive year, the ISI Jamaat of Toronto organised the 'Out of the Cold Programme', catering to the homeless of the Greater Toronto Area.

Year after year, several volunteers dedicate their time to provide hot meals and sleeping facilities during the extreme cold winter season.





Leadership Development Programme

Los Angeles, California

On the weekend of 2 to 4 January 2009, the Shia Ithna-Asheri Islamic Jamaat of Los Angeles (SIJLA) hosted an enlightening Leadership Development Programme (LDP) at their centre in Pico Rivera. The Programme was co-sponsored by The World Federation of KSIMC and The North American Shia Ithna-asheri Muslim Communities Organization (NASIMCO). The Programme was designed to help participants grow mentally, emotionally, and spiritually through a three-day intensive educational experience.

16 participants (ages 24 to 70) took part in the workshop, with seven of the participants from SIJLA Jamaat. The programme was led by two facilitators from England, Dr. Akber Mohamedali and Br. Yasin Rahim, as well as one facilitator-in-training, Sr. Tahera Rashid. The facilitators encouraged the attendees to:

- Look deep inside themselves, and appreciate their own "fitra" (a gift from God), as well as the fitra of others.
- Obtain a deeper understanding of themselves, as well as the people around them.

The lessons learned in the LDP are valuable for the success and growth in many different spheres including family, community, workplace, and government.

The workshop generated a positive energy in all of the participants where some were inspired to undertake important projects in the community. Nazneen Nathani-Mirza, Mazaher Sivjee and Minhal Kalyan agreed upon the importance of organising charitable volunteer activities for the Los Angeles Jamaat. Other participants had more personal moments of enlightenment, ranging from a confirmation of faith and spirituality, a drive to stop procrastinating, and an urge to balance both head and heart. Whatever the discovery, as Dr. Akber and Br. Yasin frequently reminded the group, *"When the student is ready, the teacher will appear."*

Islamic Festivities

Toronto, Canada

To give the public a chance to experience the various holidays celebrated by different faith groups, the York Regional Police (YRP) held its 4th Annual Holidays event on 6 December 2009. The Tableegh Committee of the ISI Jamaat of Toronto was invited to take part in the event.

Along with the Vishnu Temple, the followers of the KWANZA principles, and the Jewish Community, the Jaffari Islamic Centre presented a display on Eid. One of the tables showcased how a Muslim family celebrates.

As Muslims were soon to celebrate Eid-ul-Adha, it was the perfect opportunity to put up a display on Hajj and its significance. The basis of Hajj was explained, starting with Prophet Abraham (AS), the father of the 3 Abrahamic faiths: Islam, Judaism and Christianity. A Shia Adhan clock, a beautiful picture depicting the congregation of millions of Muslims during Hajj, a miniature Roza and several colourful tasbihs were among the items displayed.

The event was very much appreciated by all, especially by the York Regional Police. The Chief of Police, Chief Armand La Barge was interviewed, and expressed his sincere gratitude and appreciation for all of the Committee's efforts. He also thanked the Jaffari Islamic Centre and presented the Tabligh team with a certificate of participation.





Second Annual Reverts Conference

Brampton, Ontario



The second annual International Revert Conference was held at the Masumeen Islamic Centre in Brampton, Ontario on the 11th and 12th of October 2009.

The Revert Muslim Association (RMA) has been growing since 2005. The organization endeavours to serve people who adopt Islam as their religion, not just online but in the physical world as well. Its website and forums are among the top search engine hits for issues related to reversion to Islam.

A diverse audience of men, women and children attended the conference. A few hundred born and revert Shia Muslims from Canada, the US, the UK, and various other locales joined together for the sake of God to socialize, pray together, and discuss topics ranging as widely as prejudice and Ghusl Mayyit (ablution of the dead body).

Many reverts to Shia Islam feel isolated from the larger Shia community, and many do not survive. Statistics suggest as much as half of reverts to Shia Islam eventually leave the religion, with some of the primary reasons being lack of resources and social support. The intent of the conference was to bring together reverts and born Muslims in order to help create the belonging and unity as well as the knowledge and inspiration necessary for all to prosper spiritually.

The two-day event included lectures from noted scholars such as Brother Hassanain Rajabali, Shaikh Saleem Bhimji, Sayyid Muhammad Rizvi, and Shaikh Hasnain Kassamali, as well as other engaging speakers, many of them reverts, such as Brother Ulrick Vieux, a trained Harvard psychologist originally from Haiti who spoke about addiction and psychology of the Islamic community, Brother Robert Virdeen, a financial consultant who spoke about Islamic financial investments, Brother Joe Ramagali, who spoke about his master's thesis on Islamic Liberation Theology, and Sister Roshni Hafeez, a vision-impaired revert who spoke about Muslims with disabilities as well as media and activism.

Other topics included Qur'an, Fiqh of Salat, Spiritual Reality of Food, Meditation in Islam, Fatima Zahra (AS) as a Role Model, Breaking the Cycle of Abuse, Hijab, Thawab of a Muslimah, Sexual Etiquette, Divorced With Children, Prejudice, Tribalism, Parenting, Social Networking, Hajj, Striving for Excellence in Our Institutions, Witnesses to Our Actions, Taqlid, Youth's Role in Society, a Ghusl Mayyit demonstration, and a Question and Answer session with scholars and speakers.

The social networking aspect of the conference was extremely important. One of the greatest benefits of the event was that it allowed people to meet others with similar beliefs in a Western world where they may be few and far between. Many of the attendees may have non-Muslim family and have a strong need to make connections with other Shias. As people travelled home from the event, all did so having made new friends to help one another strive in the way of Allah. Within hours of the event's end, people were adding their new friends online on Facebook, posting photos, sending messages in e-mail groups and forums, and all making plans to reach out to one another, support one another on the path of Islam, and extend the benefits of the conference well beyond the confines of the two-day event.



Living as Muslims in Britain

Peterborough, UK



More than a 100 visitors attended an open house held at the Husaini Islamic Centre in Peterborough. The event took place on 29 June 2008 and followed the previous year's theme: 'Living as Muslims in Britain' with the aim of providing the locals an insight into the Mosque and the centre.

The purpose of this event was to foster greater inter-communal dialogue and help dispel myths about Muslims. Resident Aalim, Mullah Muhammad Kassamali said, *"In a period where the word Islam is only associated with terrorism and repression of women, we felt that this Open Day helped*

people to understand more about true Islam and also witness the positive contributions Muslims make to the local community. The ladies of our community demonstrated that it is possible to play a dynamic part in society whilst maintaining their Hijab and dignity. Visitors were amazed to see the outstanding involvement of our members to the city of Peterborough."

The event was attended by a cross section of the community ranging from local church vicars and police officers to youths and children. Visitors were given guided tours of the Mosque, viewed exhibitions and a PowerPoint presentation, and had an opportunity to discuss contemporary issues about Islam and Shia'ism. This year saw the introduction of two new exhibitions: 'Rites of Passage in Islam' and 'Muslim Contribution to Science through the Ages'. The visitors were gifted with a newly released book by Sheikh Shomali.

Bring a Friend Day

Wessex, London

To celebrate the month of Ramadhan, youth from the Wessex Jamaat organised "Bring a Friend Day". The programme, led by 12 year old Amir Nasser, had over 30 teachers from local schools and friends of the community come to the Al Mahdi Centre to break their fast.

When asked why hold such a programme, Amir replied, *"There are too many distorted stories about Islam and Muslims and we wanted to dispel the myths locally by sharing our faith and the true meaning of Islam that it is a peaceful religion that has co-existed with others for hundreds of years."*





United by Holy Mary - Australia

The main event of the day was a play based on fasting and its spiritual reasons. Young Muslim girls gave an account of the true meaning of fasting, that it is not only abstaining from food and water but the fasting of the ears, eyes, hands and mouth.

The highlight of the programme was a question and answer session where 3 girls, Zahra Alkadhim (13), Zahra Jaffer (15) and, Maryam Rahim (15) answered questions from friends who had come. The moderator, Mohamedabbas Jaffer began the session by asking friends and teachers to ask any questions and prefaced his remark by saying, *"please park political correctness outside and ask any questions to the young girls."*

The range of the questions asked by the guests was as powerful as the responses given. One local teacher who attended the evening said: *"Never have I seen such powerful exchange of frank dialogue where faith was presented by three young girls."*

Another teacher said: *"We generally get our questions answered by men and women. We never get a youth perspective. This opportunity you gave us was unique"*

Questions ranged from, *"what is the difference between Shia and Sunni?"* to *"why do you wear the hijab and were you forced to wear one?"* to *"why is there segregation between men and women as they pray together within one faith to one God?"*.

A religious education teacher commented: *"Whilst one could not help but notice that the young girls did not have some script in front of them that they were reading, a thought crossed my mind: 'This generation of Muslim girls in Wickham are not only comfortable in their faith but also in the society they find themselves in'."*

To foster unity among various faiths, the Imam Hasan Centre hosted the "Hills Interfaith Dialogue" on 3 September 2008. The discussion was about 'Holy Mary' from various religious perspectives. The evening began with namaz, followed by a shared Iftaar.

3 students sang a song in English and Arabic to welcome Ramadhan. Then, Mariam Asar spoke about why she was named Mariam. Mary Bagaric, a Catholic from St. Michael's church spoke about Holy Mary from a very frank and personal perspective. Syeda Tahira Kharazmi gave a well-researched speech about the life of Holy Mary, and how the Quran speaks about her, from her birth, to the birth of Jesus. The evening ended with a question and answer session.

One of the highlights of the evening was the presentation of Imam Hasan Centre's Appreciation Medals, which are normally presented in Ramadhan on the celebration night of Imam Hasan's birthday. This medal was awarded to Bill Colebrook, whose friendship with the Imam Hasan Centre began before it was even built. When the Centre was experiencing problems during its early days, Bill and his friends from St. Madeleine's Church offered the facilities of their church for their use. The Imam Hasan Centre is indeed very grateful to Bill, Father Chris, Pat, and all the parishioners at St. Madeleine's Church for making the community feel so welcome in Annangrove.





The Realities of Marriage & Family Life

Montreal, Canada



The Path of Light held its seminar on 'The Realities of Marriage and Family Life' on 14 and 15 June 2008. The first conference held in 2007 was delivered to provide support to individuals about to be or already married in a society where marriage is ridiculed and rates of divorce are increasing.

Sayed Mustafa al-Qazwini, Sheikh Saleem Bhimji, Sis Arifa Hudda and Sis Latifa Samji were the guest speakers.

The topics were addressed in the form of lectures, workshops, as well as question and answer sessions. There was also a kiosk which gave health tips for nutritious diets, pregnancy, breastfeeding and personal hygiene set up by Sister Ruba Haidar, a dietetics student in her last year.

The seminar began with a short introduction and talk by Sheikh Saleem Bhimji on the "Objective of Marriage in Islam and its Role in Society". The institution of marriage is highly esteemed within the fold of Islam, yet its primary objective does not receive due attention. This lecture focused on the objectives of marriage in Islam, why it is considered to be half of our deen and the role that it plays in advancing and protecting any given society.

The eminent scholar, Sayed Mustafa al-Qazwini, from Orange County, California spoke on 'Preparing Oneself for Marriage'. In his words of guidance, he noted that akhlāq (self-refinement and purification of the soul) are struggles which endure a lifetime.

One must prepare him/herself to the best of their abilities for marriage. For in most instances individuals are able to specify that which they seek in a mate, but do not always possess such qualities or characteristics in themselves.

Some specific tips for improving one's akhlāq to lay the foundation to be a suitable spouse were also given to the audience. There were workshops which were inter-twined with the lectures. The first such session consisted of three concurrent discussions carried out by the invited scholars.

In addition, the 3-day programme saw over 25 other topics for discussion in the form of lectures and workshops, which included:

1. Different sex drives – how to cope
2. Post-Marital Counselling: Overcoming roadblocks and avoiding divorce
3. Dealing with extended families and in-laws
4. Financial responsibilities

All of the attendees were eager to learn about the topics presented ranging from role of marriage in society, spouse selection, avoiding excesses in engagements and weddings, keeping the balance in the home, avoiding monotony in marriage, relations with in-laws, domestic violence, marital counselling and so on. Their eagerness was especially clear when the audience found it difficult to choose between two to three topics that were available simultaneously in the form of workshops. In such cases, husbands and wives split up to gain maximum benefit from the scholars present.

In order to boost those who were single and in search of a suitable spouse, the Marriage Application Form Project was launched, allowing those who are single to confidentially provide their information to the Path Of Light group which has a small committee dedicated to looking through the applications and helping to find matches based on the information provided on the forms.



CoEJ Youths Meet Tony Blair

London, UK



A delegation of youths from the Council of European Jamaats (CoEJ) attended a breakfast meeting with former Prime Minister Tony Blair at the Al Khoei Foundation, on 6 May 2008.

The delegation included Sadiq Dato (Chair of CoEJ Youth Desk), Fatima Manji (Chair of CoEJ External Relations and Media Desk), Zishan Jiwa, Fatim Kurji-Jumabhoy, Mehjabeen Rahim and Sarfraz Jeraj (Secretary of Hyderi Jamaat).

The topic of discussion was “Young Muslims and Faith in Britain”. The delegation took part in a lively and broad ranging discussion on issues such as the Iraq War, peace in the Middle East, preventing extremism amongst young British Muslims and Inter-Faith relations. Tony Blair outlined his plans and aspirations for his newly formed Faiths Foundation, explaining that religion could be a major force for good in the modern globalised world.

The Chairs of CoEJ Youth and Media Desks were also part of the greeting party for the former Prime Minister. They were able to use this opportunity to briefly introduce the work of our community and of CoEJ.

Religion & Carpentry

Seattle, Washington

Members of the Ithna-asheri Muslim Association of the Northwest (IMAN) joined hands with other local Muslims, Christians and Jews to build homes for low-income families on the east side of Seattle. The 7th Annual “Together We Build” project for Habitat for Humanity was scheduled at Snoqualmie Ridge in Snoqualmie, Washington October 10 to 12 and October 16 to 18, 2008.

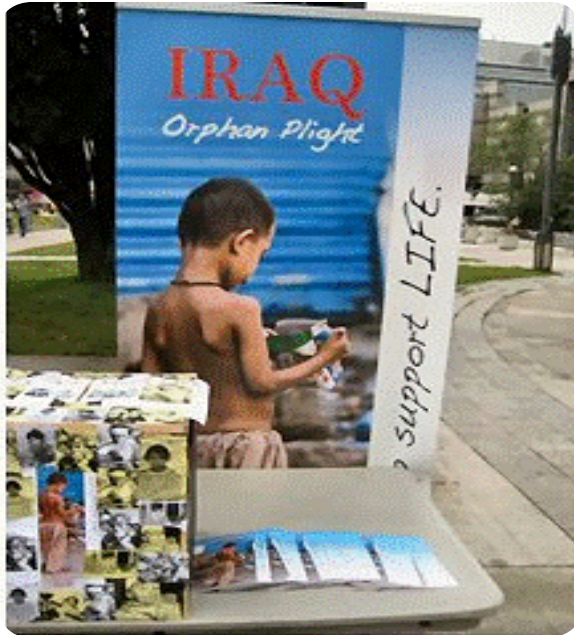
For the 7th consecutive year, *Together We Build* has built homes for low-income families in Seattle. The group arose out of a Catholic prayer chain which started after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. It has grown to include 10 churches, mosques and synagogues.

Among the volunteers was Phil Gerson, a retired Boeing employee who belongs to Bellevue’s Temple B’nai Torah, who said that volunteering has deepened his knowledge of Judaism as well as his appreciation of other faiths. Gerson calls Kirkland’s Ithnasheri Muslim Association of the Northwest (IMAN) his “second-favourite place to worship; whether it’s a church or a synagogue or a mosque, there is one God,”

Farhad Ahmed said he is more familiar with Christianity than with Judaism. He did not know, for instance, that observant Jews, like Muslims, do not eat pork. He said that he and many other young people aren’t too keen on formal interfaith discussions, but he leaped at the chance to mix religion and carpentry.



Iraq Orphan Plight Toronto, Ontario



On 10 and 11 July 2008, the Tabligh Committee of the Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri Jamaat of Toronto (ISIJ), in cooperation with The World Federation of KSIMC held its first ever fundraising event to raise money for the orphan children of Iraq. Volunteers gave their time and effort to bring awareness of the dire state of the orphans in Iraq. The event took place at both the Scarborough Civic Centre and Mel Lastman Square.

Specially designed water bottles were printed with the phrase '*I care, therefore I give*'. The bottles were donated and were sold for \$5 each. All proceeds went to the Iraq Orphan Fund.

The stalls drew much attention and visitors offered their support in several ways. Some donated generously, while others took brochures to distribute to their friends and family. Many expressed their compassion towards the innocent lives lost in Iraq, having come themselves from war torn countries themselves. They quickly connected with the situation and had tears in their eyes.

As a result of the success of this event and the importance given to caring for orphans, this has become one of ISIJ's annual donation campaign.

Rebuilding Homes Hangu, Pakistan



The World Federation of KSIMC in partnership with the Hussaini Foundation of Pakistan have worked together to rebuild homes in the District of Hangu that were either damaged or destroyed by the Taliban. After the Taliban attacked the community in December and January 2008/2009, 27 houses were destroyed and 74 homes were damaged.

The district of Hangu is a settled area of the North-West Frontier Province in Pakistan located approximately 150 kilometres from Islamabad. District Hangu is surrounded by Aurakzai Agency, Kurram Agency, North Waziristan Agency, Tehsil Tal, Parachinar and Lachi. The total population of District Hangu is nearly 0.8 million where 30% of the inhabitants comprise of Shia Muslims.

Hangu is divided by the main highway that leads to Parachinar. Access to Parachinar is blocked due to the Taliban insurgency. The Muslim population is also divided along this highway who are trapped and surrounded by the Taliban people.

The World Federation contributed Rs. 3.54 million in housing and relief programmes in Hangu through the Hussaini Foundation. To date, nine new houses are under construction, and six partially damaged homes have been renovated and two more restored.



Arusha Camp '09 Nakuru, Kenya

The 2009 Arusha Camp held in Nakuru, Kenya educated and inspired over 80 boys and girls from across the world on a number of Islamic issues. The atmosphere of the camp was nurturing, caring, educational, spiritual and fun. The camp comprised of a combination of lectures from knowledgeable speakers, outdoor activities and field trips.

Lectures were held on the subjects of ahkaam, aqiad, akhlaq, Nahjul Balagha, fiqh, Quranic tafseer, medical and sports guidance.

After her children returned from the camp, a parent said, *'I have noticed tremendous change in their social, spiritual, and communal outlook and only a defining moment at the right time of their life can bring such transition. I am sure this will definitely endure to make them better and practicing Shias.'*

A student said, *'It was a worthwhile trip, educational, enjoyable and fun. We recommend to all youths not to miss such an opportunity in the future.'*

Mohamed Bhai Nanji, President of Peterborough Jamaat said: *'Brilliant. I wish it had happened during my time in Tanga/Pangani in the 60's and 70's. These are lucky children. Well done for organising such an event.'*

The camp had a significant impact on the campers. The students gained a further religious awareness and an understanding of their duties in life as Muslims.



JIBA Loan Scheme Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania

On the auspicious occasion of Milad un Nabi, JIBA Tanzania announced its new partnership with the Economic Empowerment Committee (EEC) of the KSI Jamaat of Dar es Salaam, where JIBA is now managing the Business Loans Scheme.

The programme offers loans to new or existing businesses in the amounts of Tshs 2m to Tshs 20m. The loan scheme can be accessed by writing to support@jibatanzania.com.

Shab-e-Barat Qum, Iran

On the eve of 15th Sha'baan 1426, The World Federation of KSIMC's Islamic Education Qum Office in collaboration with Dar al-Zahra held a programme celebrating the birthday of the Awaited Saviour (AS).

The function included recitation of Dua Kumail, a lecture in English, qasidas in Arabic and Urdu, prize giving to 12 of the attendees and dinner. Around 140 men, women and children attended the function.





Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy

Vancouver, Canada

In response to the need for Shia families in Vancouver, Canada to be able to provide a safe, Islamic environment for their children's education, The Az-Zahraa Islamic Academy opened its doors in the fall of 2003.

Previously, children either attended public schools or private schools run by Sunni organisations. These options had limitations. The community then recognised the need for combining high quality academic education with the pillars of Shia beliefs.

The school currently has close to 100 students enrolled from pre-school to Grade 7. In addition, after recently noting the need for quality Islamic day care, the school also provides a full day care. Small class size and an emphasis on individual achievement ensures each child is valued and treasured. The aim is to meet our children's religious, academic, emotional, social, cultural, and physical needs.

All teachers are fully certified by the BC College of Teachers and participate in ongoing professional development to remain current on best practices. In addition, the school has specialty teachers for Quran and Islamic Studies.

Being brought up in Canada provides many advantages, especially the opportunity to be part of a multi-cultural, multi-faith society. Although a large percentage of students attend Az-Zahraa Islamic Centre regularly, the school also educates many students who attend other Shia centres and there is a growing interest from Sunni and even non-Muslim families. Students are taught to respect each other and appreciate the diversity of humanity.

One of the schools goals is to provide diversity in education. Joint projects with other religious schools are frequent and mutually beneficial. The academy holds interfaith classroom meetings, and special events like the Royal Canadian Mounted





Police Junior Police Academy with attendance from Christian, Jewish and Islamic schools. Recently, a ground breaking Muslim/Jewish basketball game that received wide media coverage was also held. Extra-curricular clubs are open to all neighbourhood children both Muslim and non-Muslim. These activities strengthen the children's da'wah program and teach children how to value and respect everyone.

The students are also actively involved in the community. The intermediate students attend daily Jamaat salaah and practice serving the community by reciting Adhaan, Iqamah, and leading ziyarats and duas. The students also love to give short speeches before Juma' and majlis.

The students actively participate in a variety of service projects benefiting both Muslim and non-Muslims alike, such as fundraisers to alleviate hunger in their local city as well as raising funds for a community in another part of the world. Students run a Black Ribbon Campaign in Muharram with funds benefitting the Mosque. The school held a tremendously successful joint fund-raiser with Comfort Aid International allowing a school to be built in Afghanistan. Students are keenly aware of the tragedies in our world and are always looking for ways to help. They have sponsored seniors, families, orphans and even wildlife. In addition, students look forward to local events that combine physical fitness with philanthropy such as the Terry Fox Run, Jump rope for Heart and walk-a-thons for various charities.

Students have found a successful balance between religion and community at the school, learning how to conduct their lives according to Islam as well as interacting with the different people, religions and cultures around them.

Economic Upliftment - Kenya

Bilal Muslim Mission of Kenya (BMMK) has been working with Kenyan citizens on the Economic Upliftment Programme. The aim of this initiative is to provide capital investment in order to create an income for the deserving. In addition, emphasis is placed on individuals and families to save, allowing them to have capital should they need it in the future.

Co-sponsored by the International Development and Relief Foundation (IDRF), the second module of the programme was held at Madrasah Ahlil Kisaa, Kichakamwaju Rural Centre from 23 to 27 March 2009, and Madrasah Ahlil Bayt, Shimoni Rural Centre from 16 to 20 March, 2009. A total of 86 participants were in attendance.

The topics covered in these sessions aimed to empower the participants with specific business skills. These included:

- Introduction to business
- Profit and loss
- Cash control
- SWOT analysis
- Marketing 6 P's
- Feasibility study
- Intro to book keeping
- Wages
- Dividends
- Business plans
- Project identification
- Work plans
- Evaluation

All sessions were interactive and the instructors answered several questions. The upliftment programme has had a significant impact in the lives of the people in Kenya. The number of group members has increased. In addition, individual's member savings have significantly increased.

The group is now scheduled to undertake the third module of the credit training programme.



Opening of Masjid-e-Ghadir Toronto, Ontario

On 15 March 2009, the Islamic Shia Ithna Asheri (ISIJ) of Toronto held the opening ceremony of Masjid-e-Ghadir at the Jaffari Community Centre. The need for this centre was identified as the Jamaat had outgrown the existing facility.

In order to make this project a success, the community worked together to plan and fund raise for the centre. The goal of the project was to create a vibrant community that would cater to the needs of all individuals, attracting the young and old alike.

Everyone came forward to assist in fund raising for the centre. Whether it was collecting coins, holding bake sales, selling bricks, barbeques, or general fundraising during special occasions, people of different ages and backgrounds were more than happy to lend a hand.

Volunteers from the community were appointed to form the Technical Committee and worked endless hours, showing enthusiasm and heart.

The masjid's landmark dome is a focal point in the city, inviting new Muslim families to the mosque and expressing the spread of Islam to other faiths.

The completed Centre includes the masjid, nursery, two zari rooms, a school, madrasah, fitness rooms, youth and seniors lounges, a day care centre, seminar rooms, and a games room. Inshallah, the new centre will serve several generations to come.



Annual Ramadhan I'tikaaf

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

The annual I'tikaaf organised by the Tabligh Sub-Committee of KSIJ Dar es Salaam was held from 21 to 23 Ramadhan 1430. There were a total of 50 participants in this year's event.

I'tikaaf in the physical sense is to stick or adhere to the Masjid for a minimum of three days in the state of fasting, while the spiritual sense is to leave this world full of illusions and mirages for the sole purpose of seeking the pleasure of God, by being fully devoted to Him and Him alone. Just as one who goes for Hajj has to leave behind everything and divorce the world to gain proximity to the Almighty, a Mu'takif has to do the same.

I'tikaaf is like temporary death. It has the purpose of reminding individuals the reality of the day when everyone will be ready to sacrifice the whole world so that they can be saved from the promised wrath of God to those who disbelieved. During I'tikaaf, all worldly communications are barred, so that individuals are free to increase the ability to connect with God.

DAY 1: 11 SEPTEMBER /21 RAMADHAN 1430

This day marks the day in which the Muslim Ummah was orphaned by the martyrdom of our first Imam (AS) and there couldn't have been a more mournful day to begin this journey towards God. Before Imsak, all mu'takif reached the masjid and the Niyah was performed in unison. Sheikh Safdar Razi eloquently described some rules, conditions and restrictions of I'tikaaf. Groups spent time in prayers, duas, or getting physically and mentally prepared.

DAY 2: 12 SEPTEMBER/22 RAMADHAN 1430

By day two, participants were beginning to become engrossed in the atmosphere. The day continued with various namaaz, duas, amaals, and prayers. Rest was advised to all participants, as physical strength was just as important as spiritual strength.

DAY 3: 13 SEPTEMBER/ 23 RAMADHAN

By day three, individuals were busy reaching their goals, returning to God in their own ways. A debate was also held on the subject, "Which is better - wealth or education?"

At the closing ceremony, Sheikh Jabir Chandoo was invited as the guest of honour and he truly inspired the participants with his words of wisdom. Prior to departing, Salaatul Maghribain was prayed, followed by Iftaar.

Alhamduillah, the participants walked away from the experience spiritually uplifted and content, making the I'tikaaf a true success.

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