

THE MUSLIM COUNCIL OF BRITAIN

A step towards greater consultation, cooperation and coordination on Muslim Affairs in the UK.

Muslim Council of Britain Weekly E-Newsletter

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Reports and Events Update

Ramadan Mubarak

With the blessed month of Ramadan due to commence tonight, we pray that we are all able to benefit from the opportunities it offers us insha'Allah and that we are able to perform our worship in the best possible manner. Ramadan timetables can be obtained from www.ramadan.co.uk

The Common Good

The latest edition of the MCB hardcopy newsletter The Common Good is now available and has been distributed. For further copies please contact the MCB Office.

Creating Hope for Young Muslims

The Muslim Council of Britain issued a press statement on 4 November welcoming the publication of two studies on British Muslims. 'The Situation of Muslims in the UK' published by the Open Society Institute (OSI) provides an expert assessment of the concerns of British Muslims and recommendations that will serve as a bench-mark to measure institutional change. The survey commissioned by the MCB-affiliate, the Islamic Society of Britain to coincide with the launch of Islam Awareness Week, is also timely in its findings on how British Muslims are perceived today by society at large.

"With its own commitment to constructive engagement with mainstream society, the MCB is heartened by this survey's finding that 84% believe that it is possible for Britain's Muslims and people of other faiths to "live peacefully together at close quarters". Interestingly, the younger respondents were more positive, holding out a message of hope for community relations in our country," said Mr Iqbal Sacranie, Secretary-General of the MCB.

The OSI report argues for the integration of religious education into the schooling process – suggesting for example that Arabic could be offered as a modern language option alongside modern European languages. This would ensure a better balance in the overall educational burden placed on Muslim pupils and contribute towards improving achievement levels. Both studies endorse the MCB's persistent campaign that the reality of religious discrimination is acknowledged and legislation introduced to limit this blight. The OSI report also validates the work put in by the MCB and its affiliates in the campaign for the inclusion of the religion question in the 2001 Census.

For full text please refer to www.mcb.org.uk.

Work on Islamic Finance

Iqbal Asaria of the MCB's Business and Economics Committee is part of a working party convened by the Governor of the Bank of England and chaired by Andrew Buxton, former Charman of Barclays Bank. This working party is liaising with different government departments to work out ways to incorporate into UK law and procedures the changes required to allow a level playing field for Shari'a compliant finance products, including home purchase.

One of the key changes required is to the way stamp duty is levied at present. Iqbal Asaria participated in the working party's meeting on Wednesday 16 October with the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Ruth Kelly MP to discuss this issue. The Financial Secretary responded positively to the suggestions and proposals of the working party. The Treasury was favourable to receiving proposals relating to the levying of stamp duty for incorporation in the 2003 Finance Bill, parliamentary schedules permitting. In the interim, suggestions for a satisfactory arrangement for avoiding double stamp duty would also be considered.

In addition to the Treasury, the Financial Services Authority (FSA) has also indicated that it will consider proposals for modifying the capital reserve ratio requirements for the treatment of Islamic financial products. Iqbal Asaria was also invited to attend the launch of the Islamic Financial Services Board (IFSB) in Malaysia last week.

Lord Filkin Visits The Muslim Welfare House

On Friday 25th October Lord Filkin, Minister for Race and Community Relations visited the MCB Affiliate Muslim Welfare House in Finsbury Park, London. Meeting with MWH trustees and staff, Lord Filkin was given an introduction to the wide ranging activities ongoing at the Centre, including the Home Office funded *Opportunity Schemes* Project.

Further items discussed included the media coverage of Islam and the need for official government support for educational initiatives such as Islam Awareness Week. After the discussion Lord Filkin thanked participants for their time – saying "Across the country, centres like the Muslim Welfare House, with their commitment to community development and their enterprise and dedication, are playing a vital role in building strong and vibrant communities throughout Britain. One of the most essential ingredients to achieving a strong and successful multi-cultural society is the enthusiasm and commitment of our young people. So I was pleased to be able to meet and speak with a group of young Muslims who are committed to playing an active part in their community."

Fadi Itani, MWH Executive Director thanked Lord Filkin for coming to Muslim Welfare House and said: 'It is essential that policy and decision makers meet and talk to the grassroots and oversee positive community initiatives.' For more information please contact MWH Office on 020 7263 3071, Email info@mwht.org.uk

Consultancy Services

Egal Community Consultants, on behalf of the MCB, are conducting seminars and offering on-site visits to assist Muslim-focused organisations in submitting funding proposals to local councils or Central Government. The consultancy will help communities, including mosques and charity organisations, become more involved in local projects to improve their area in an effective, efficient and responsive way. Egal Community Consultants will visit and identify the strengths and weaknesses of an organisation and provide a constructive written report with suggestions on how to improve organisational development, governance, management, training and development alongside future plans. For further information, please refer to the MCB Website <http://www.mcb.org.uk>

Islam Awareness Week

The annual 'Islam Awareness Week' organised by MCB affiliate Islamic Society of Britain (ISB) was launched this year on 4 November. On 7 November, the ISB will make a public call for a One Day National fast by taking part in one or all of the elements of the fast. Participants will be encouraged to donate to local and national charities via the IAW web site, thus sharing in Ramadan's spirit of fasting and helping others. All monies raised will benefit local, national and international charitable causes.

All monies should be made payable to "Fasting to Remember" and sent to Islamic Society of Britain, 71 Hob Moore Road, Birmingham B10 9AZ. For further information please contact: Sher Khan, National IAW Co-ordinator.

Telephone: 07092359611 Email: admin@iaw.org.uk; Website: www.iaw.org.uk

Committees Update

Media Committee

Letter to the Evening Standard

The Media Committee wrote to the Editor of the Evening Standard on 24 October regarding an article by Brian Sewell. Whilst Sewell's article recognised that the world needs to address the gross injustices in Palestine and avoid a war against Iraq he included in his column an unfair misrepresentation referring to "50 million militant Muslims in the north of Nigeria" and stating that 'Islam has always been militant' combining this with a graphic picture of Muslim spectators at a hanging gaping as men and women 'choke slowly in the noose'. The MCB letter voiced the concern that "We must surely refrain from actions that will build more barriers between us and the Islamic world...It is precisely to respond to these misrepresentations and caricatures that the Muslim Council of Britain has recently published 'The Quest for Sanity - Reflections on September 11 and the Aftermath' - it bears a message of hope rather than despair."

Letter to the Times

On 29 October, Inayat Bunglawala, Secretary of the MCB Media Committee wrote to the Editor of the Times to express appreciation for the article "Putin Is Forced Into Human Rights Limelight", by Libby Purves published on the same day. The article elucidated on the long Chechen struggle for independence and the massive human rights violations, including child rape, torture and mutilation, that Russian troops are perpetrating on a daily basis in the republic of Chechnya. The author displayed an understanding that the "casual, arrogant abuse" inflicted on the civilian Chechen population is proving to be wholly counterproductive. Inayat wrote: "We hope your paper will continue to call for a negotiated and peaceful settlement in Chechnya and not be among those who have turned a blind eye to the atrocities being committed there."

Weatherill Committee

On 24 October, a Weatherill Committee meeting was convened. The meeting was attended by editors from both broadcast and print media to look at the issue of terminology. A number of issues were debated and the working group is due to meet again shortly in order to take the project of producing a guide for journalists further and to discuss other issues that are of concern to the Muslim Community.

Health & Medical Committee

Radio Interviews

Dr Mujahid Qureshi was interviewed on several local radio stations in respect of the recently launched campaign relating to Influenza vaccine.

UN Conference on Cloning Issues

As a member of the Pro-Life and Pro Family organisations, MCB representative Dr A Majid Katme attended the UN conference on issues relating to Cloning where the opportunity was taken to represent a Muslim viewpoint.

MDDA Conference

The Muslim Doctors' and Dentists' Association (MDDA) organised a one day national conference on "Islamic perspective of Ethical / Medical Issues". The conference was held on Sunday, 20 October 2002 at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London. The conference proceedings will be available shortly.

Education & Training Committee

Ramadan Guidelines for Schools

Further requests for the MCB's Education, Training and Employment Committee (ETEC) four page 'Guidance to Schools on arrangements for Muslim Pupils during Ramadan' have been made by a number of Directors of Education.

The initiative states: "As fasting is a responsibility as well as an obligation in Islam it is important that

pupils are supported while continuing with normal school life. It is equally important that pupils realise that Ramadan is not an opportunity to try to gain special individual rights within the school. Schools will wish to recognise the importance of Ramadan to Muslim pupils through the curriculum, collective worship and other opportunities." The guidance letter can be found at www.mcb.org.uk.

Women & Family Affairs Committee

Marriage and Relationship Support Grant

Dr Reefat Drabu, Chair of the Women & Family Affairs Committee attended a meeting on 19 October at the Lord Chancellor's Department to apply for a Marriage and Relationship Support Grant in conjunction with the ReDoc Committee. The meeting was well attended and items discussed included the proposed grant and the ensuing initiatives it would facilitate.

Social Affairs Committee

Committee Meeting

On Sunday 3 November, the Social Affairs Committee met at the Islamic Cultural Centre, London. At the meeting, chaired by Shibani Akbar, Neelam Farzana was elected as Vice Chair and Babak Zadeh Amin as Secretary. A number of proposed functions and targets were discussed and adopted, further details of which will shortly be available from the Social Affairs Committee Section of the MCB Website.

New on the MCB Website

- **Discussion forum and bulletin board for MCB committee office-bearers**
Access details can be obtained from Jamil Sherif jsherif@mcb.org.uk
- **Media Section**
Regular updates of Letters to Editors and Producers
- **Library Section**
New article by Dr Daud Abdullah, Assistant Secretary General of the MCB. Paper delivered at the House of Commons on 29 October 2002, 'British Strategic Interests and the Balfour Declaration'

The Quest for Sanity

Letters of Appreciation (Cont'd)

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I have read all the essays with interest. They need as wide a circulation as possible not least in the media, and I would like to wish you every success in publicising them.

John Battle MP, Leeds West Constituency Office

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The book is informative and well written. It gives a fascinating insight into what it has been like to be a Muslim, both here in the United Kingdom and in the rest of the world, during recent times. I hope you found the Government prepared to listen and act where necessary...I am grateful for the part you have played in maintaining calm during this difficult time and also for the role that the MCB has taken

in helping the community to cope.

David Blunkett, Home Office

His Royal Highness was most grateful for the book and commented that the title "says it all".

Nigel Baker Assistant Private Secretary to HRH The Prince of Wales

It is a good timely idea to produce such a useful publication enlightening and promoting a better understanding of our peace loving Muslim faith.

Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, Ambassador for the Kingdom of Bahrain, London

I have met with representatives of the Muslim Community in Cambridge on a number of occasions and this book will help me to further understand concerns that they may have.

Anne Campbell, MP for Cambridge

In the past few days I have been reading 'The Quest for Sanity'...and I would like you to know that genuinely I think it is a quite splendid, comprehensive and interesting publication....I certainly learned a great deal from it and I would like your organisation to know that if everyone could read it it would do a power of good for community relations.

Sir Teddy Taylor MP

May I congratulate you on a timely publication

Elizabeth J Harris, Secretary for Inter-Faith Relations

To order copies of The Quest For Sanity (£12.75 each, plus P&P) please contact the MCB on 0208 903 9650 or order online at www.mcb.org.uk/books.

Events

Event: **Islam Awareness Week**

Date: 4 - 11 November

Held By: Islamic Society of Britain

Venue: Nationwide

Contact: Sher Khan, National IAW Co-ordinator. Telephone: 07092359611

Email: admin@iaw.org.uk;

Website: www.iaw.org.uk

Information: On 7 November, the ISB will make a public call for a One Day National fast - by taking

part in one or all of

the elements of the fast. Participants will be encouraged to donate to local and national charities via the

IAW web site, thus sharing in Ramadan's spirit of fasting and helping others. All monies raised will benefit

local, national and international charitable causes.

