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BRINGING HARMONY TO ALL THE COMMUNITIES

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MIRACLE ISSUES

:: Local Events

Consul General of Pakistan host Azadi celebration

By Raza Mirani

For the first time in the history of the local Pakistani Community a flag raising ceremony was held at the home of the Consul General of Pakistan to Vancouver, aptly on August 14th, the Independence day of Pakistan. Mr. Moin-Ul-Haque graciously opened his doors to invited members of the community to take part in a short but dignified ceremony where the Crescent and Star of Pakistan was raised while the anthem of Pakistan played. The event was conducted by Vice Consul General Tipu Usman and saw PCCA President Naveed Waraich and PCA President Farrukh Alam both officially greet the community and thank the Consul General for hosting the event. An impassioned speech was made by Mr. Moin-Ul-Haque where he spoke of the pride of raising the Pakistani Flag in Vancouver for the first time as Consul General. A special appearance and impromptu performance was given by famed Pakistani folk singer Ms. Tasawar Khanum. The event which started at 11:00 am wrapped up with a delicious lunch and good conversation.



Azadi Mela 2008 at Pakistan House

By Raza Mirani

Pakistan House played host to Pakistan-Canada's Association's Azadi Mela on Sunday August 17th. The event began at 2 pm with an indoor mela filled with clothing, food, jewelry, mehndi and many more items. Pakistan House has been newly renovated with new tile flooring as well as a permanent stage setup surrounding by hardwood lino. The new look of Pakistan House really brought the event to life and captivated many of the people in attendance, many who have never visited Pakistan House before. As the anthems of both Pakistan and Canada played, flags of both countries were raised high above Pakistan House at 6 pm sharp. Brief speeches of thanks and appreciation were made by Consul General Moin-Ul-Haque and PCA President Farrukh Alam. The event moved to a semi-formal portion hosted by PCA General Secretary Raza Mirani. Mr. Mirani acknowledged the life saving efforts of Ms. Ayesha Chaudhry, Mr. Mohd. Shamsi and Mr. Habib Khan during PCA's Canada Day picnic, where a member of the community had a heart attack and the previously mentioned individuals sprung into quick action to save his life. Islamic Trust Treasurer Jamil Chaudhry acknowledged the hard work and efforts made by members of the community not formally part of the PCA board by presenting them with clothing sets as a token of appreciation. PCA Director Ms. Fareena Pannun announced an upcoming Chaand Raat to be held on the 28th of Ramadaan at Pakistan House. The event then turned to a musical celebration of Pakistani Independence with a spirited performance by

Ali Zaidi and AKS. The event wrapped up at approximately 9 pm .



New Yorkers celebrate Pakistan 's Independence Day

Special report by Mohammad Pirzada

New York City (City Hall)

The 61st Jashan Azadi (Independence Day) of Pakistan was celebrated at New York City hall where many community members were invited by a local Pakistani committee. The Consul General of Pakistan, Mr. Mohsin Rizvi was the chief guest and Councillors Kendall Stewart and Hiram Monserrate were the guests from city hall.

NEW YORK CITY (Madison Ave.): Thousands of people from the Pakistani American Community were seen at Madison Ave. in New York City on Sunday, August 24th, gathered for the 24th Annual Pakistan Day Parade. It was organized by Pakistan Day Parade committee with the help of ARY digital TV Channel. People started arriving in the morning as they enjoyed the free breakfast of Halwa Puri. The Parade started from 41st Street , ending at 23rd Street on Madison Ave , where a number of speeches on Pakistan and Pakistani Milli Nagmas were played. The slogan, "Pakistan Zindabad (Long live Pakistan)" could be clearly heard over 3 km, showing the strength of the community in the region.

A number of Pakistani stalls were set up in which clothes, food, jewellery and many others items were being sold. Unlike Vancouver , this New York event was dominated by youth audience who actively participated in all activities. Renowned Pakistani musical artists were invited by the committee to entertain the crowd. The highlight performance was by famous newcomer, Amanat Ali Khan, who presented national songs as well as others. Other artists included Shazia Khushk, Saima Khan, Naeem Abbass Roofi, Arif Butt, and Baba Prince who also received appreciation from the crowd following their performances.

BROOKLYN : Another big crowd of Pakistani community a fun-filled day at the Brooklyn Meela, organized at the occasion of Pakistani Independence day. Pakistani flags and stalls dominated the scene. The parade was successfully organized by Brooklyn Meela Committee. Renowned Pakistani singer Jawad Ahmed entertained the crowd whereas TV host of Aik Din Geo ke Sath (airing on GEO TV channel), Mr. Suhail Waraich and many other local politicians spoke at this event.



UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH ISLAMOPHOBIA

Canadian Islamic Congress organizes successful conference at Masjid Al-Salam

By Dr. N. Habib

Members of community packed the room to listen and participate in a discussion on Islamophobia on August 22nd, 2008 . The event was organized by Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC) and conducted by M. Yasin. Several political dignitaries and key members of the Muslim community were also in attendance. Dr. Naiyer Habib, a director of CIC Congress opened the conference with his remark that Islamophobia, unjustified fear of Muslims and Islam, is rampant across the western world and is on the rise. Its impact is not only on Muslims but also on the entire western world. However, our leaders pay no heed to this but they should look at Britain . The Runnymede Trust established a commission on anti-Semitism in 1990. Their final report recommended that similar commission should be established by Runnymede to look at Islamophobia on the rise. Islamophobia: a challenge for us all was launched in 1997 by the new Home Secretary, Jack Straw. Richard Stone a renowned British Personality was appointed Chairman. It has 72 page documents for British to act on. It is available on www.montrealmuslimnewsnet.com as Islamophobia and click on for next page and look at." The follow-up report from 2004, 'Islamophobia- - "



After the introduction, Dr. Mohammed Elmasry was invited to speak. Dr. Elmasry is the President of the CIC and a very active member of the Canadian Muslim community, particularly on the political scene. He opened his talk by explaining that although Islamophobia is a new term, it describes an ancient phenomenon that existed as far back as the Crusader era of the Middle Ages. "The term "phobia" refers to an excessive and irrational fear that cannot be dispelled through appeals to human logic and reason. Thus

Islamophobia is the excessive and irrational fear of Islam and Muslims which cannot be reasoned away by those who succumb to it," he said. Dr. Elmasry then spoke about the presence and effects of Islamophobia in our educational system, in the mass media, in politics, and in the workplace. He concluded with five key points, suggesting that:

- (1) Muslims must know their faith and civilization deeply and share that knowledge openly with others;
- (2) Canadians should work together to achieve and maintain zero tolerance of Islamophobia;
- (3) Muslims must use the Canadian legal system to expose persistent and malicious Islamophobes;
- (4) Muslims should work proactively with mainstream society toward achieving smart integration; and
- (5) Canadians should establish alternative media to offer fair play for key justice and peace issues in the public square, as a means of counterbalancing the current high concentration of media ownership in this country.

Derrick O'Keefe, a writer and Activist and co-chair of British Columbia 's largest anti-war coalition, Stopwar.ca also spoke at the event. He said, "Islamophobia is a dangerous phenomenon of great concern to all Canadians. Like many other forms of racism before it, Islamophobia is used to help justify a series of government policies that go against the Canadian people's support for civil liberties and for peace. These include the unjust war in Afghanistan , the use of torture, rendition and detention without trial, as we have seen in the cases of Omar Khadr, Maher Arar and the Security Certificate detainees respectively. It is of vital importance that we challenge all manifestations of Islamophobia that appear in the media, and the develop new forms of independent media to challenge the bias of the mainstream media which has a highly concentrated ownership."

Another speaker at the event was Khurram Awan, who became widely known in the community after filing a case against Maclean's Magazine Islamophobic articles in the B.C. Human Rights Tribuna. Awan, now a lawyer, said that he is not against free speech. "We did not object to the publication of MacLean's article, the Future belongs to Islam, but we have the right that our voice must be respected by media. We asked McLean 's to give equal space and prominence for response

which was denied", he said. McLean 's published more than 12 articles in less than two years, which are Islamophobic. Various blogs and comments which appear following the publication and after the case was filed were full of hate and abuse against Muslims their religion and God, although it is the same God. Media in general treats Muslims very differently. He criticized that no attention has been paid to the recommendation that few should not own media, but today almost entire media in Canada is owned by one. McLean 's does not belong to the ethical regulating body of media. So there was no other option but to go to the court or the Human Right Commission. Ontario Human Right commission could not take the case but issued statement regarding Islamophobic nature of their articles and advised media for responsible publication.

Greg Felton, a Canadian writer on the Middle East also attended the event and spoke to the audience. He said, "the threat to Muslims comes not only from those who launch defamatory, bigoted attacks, but also from those who make such attacks look respectable. The case against Maclean's magazine is a prime example. The writings of Mark Steyn are transparently hateful and in violation of acknowledged standards of journalistic ethics, but when victims of such an attack seek redress, the issue mutates into a false struggle between free speech and censorship. All over the Internet, Mark Steyn's apologists are bleating about how the Human Rights Commissions have no business passing judgment on editorial matters—and by implication that the case against Maclean's should never have been entertained—but our editorial standards are so biased toward Israel, that when Muslims must take the initiative ,they appear to be the aggressors." He also said that the fundamental distinction between lawful free speech and unlawful, licentious speech is deliberately blurred, so people who are otherwise able to distinguish them might be duped into seeing defamation cases as attacks on free speech rather than as defences of it. Thus, when outright defamation occurs, the substance of the attacks is lost in a diversionary tactic that paints the defamer as a victim, and the victim as the aggressor.

Following the speeches, a panel discussion was held in which the speakers answered questions from the audience. The insightful event concluded with a vote of thanks from Sr. Tazul Ali followed by dua for everyone. The attendees left the conference with increased knowledge about Islamophobia and how to deal with it.

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UNDERSTANDING AND DEALING WITH ISLAMOPHOBIA

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