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National Spiritual Assembly

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From the table of the National Spiritual Assembly

January 12, 2002

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS

The National Spiritual Assembly is pleased to share with you some of the highlights of its recent consultations: The National Assembly continued its study of the document “The Institution of the Counsellors” with Counsellor Shahriar Razavi at its December meeting. It is hoped that local communities have also started to study this important document with their Auxiliary Board member or Assistant. It appears that not all communities received the complimentary copy of the document which was sent out in July last year. If your community is one of those, please contact the National Office as soon as possible.

The National Spiritual Assembly had a highly fruitful, day-long consultation on the development of the training institute process with Counsellor Razavi at its January meeting. One of the learning points that is clearly emerging is that the quality and capability of tutors is key to ensuring the efficacy of the vital process of the development of human resources. The National Assembly, the Bahá'í Councils and the Training Institute Boards are committed to evaluating the effectiveness of this process and identifying where improvements can be made.

- To improve the range and quality of activities for junior youth at the two main national events each year, National Convention and the National Conference, a new National Events Junior Youth Team has been appointed. The Children's and Junior Youth Activities Team, which was charged with organising children's and junior youth activities at national events, will now only deal with children's activities and is now re-named the Children's Activities Team;
- The National Spiritual Assembly consulted about the state of the Bahá'í International Fund and the pressing needs of the newly-established World Centre Endowment Fund. Our national Bahá'í community includes within it those whose access to material resources and income level far exceeds that of the mass of the Bahá'ís worldwide. It is therefore hoped that these believers will now be moved by the need for generous support of the Endowment Fund, in addition to increasing their assistance to the Bahá'í International Fund;
- At its December meeting, the National Spiritual Assembly reviewed the success of the National Conference which was held in Scarborough in early November. In light of the overall aims of the Five Year Plan and the needs of the UK Bahá'í community, the National Assembly has decided that this community needs to have one large-scale national event each year to which Bahá'ís can invite their friends to attend. This National Bahá'í Festival will be a celebration of the Faith in action, a statement that the Faith has important things to say and do, and will serve the following three main aims:
 - to afford the Bahá'ís from all over the UK an opportunity to meet and mingle and make new, and consolidate old, friendships,
 - to help the Bahá'ís of the UK feel good about themselves and about

to help the Bahá'ís of the UK feel good about themselves and about the Faith,

- to bring people who are not yet Bahá'ís closer to the Faith,

- It is the National Spiritual Assembly's hope that the National Festival programmes will be both content and experience rich and will create a warm and loving atmosphere for all those who participate. It is also hoped that parallel activities will be arranged for junior youth and youth as well some family-based and transgenerational activities;
- The issue of the implementation within the Bahá'í community of the foundational principle of the equality of the sexes was the subject of earnest consultation around the National Spiritual Assembly table. How can we ensure that Bahá'í men take this issue more seriously? This, and other important questions, will be the subject of further consultations with Counsellor Shahriar Razavi and Mrs Zarin Hainsworth-Fadaei, Director of the Office for the Advancement of Women, at the February meeting of the National Assembly.

Finally, the National Spiritual Assembly continues to remember the friends in its prayers at each of its meetings.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,
National Spiritual Assembly

Message from Prime Minister Tony Blair

I HAVE A CLEAR vision of a multi-cultural Britain – one which values the contribution made by each of our ethnic, cultural and faith communities. I am determined to see a truly dynamic society, in which people from different ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds can live and work together, whilst retaining their distinctive identities, in an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding.

British Bahá'ís make a significant contribution towards achieving this vision and we are a stronger, better country because of it. It is particularly important that we celebrate the contribution of the Bahá'í faith to the stability and prosperity of British society as a whole.

I am very much encouraged by the vision the Bahá'í community demonstrates in recognising the power

of interfaith dialogue and the importance of all citizens fulfilling their potential. Your community has a vibrancy which is well demonstrated by the recent opening of the Bahá'í Gardens on Mount Carmel in Israel. It is an outstanding monument to your faith.

[Signed Tony Blair]
March 2002

National Spiritual Assembly Memorial Project

January 18, 2002

THE NATIONAL SPIRITUAL ASSEMBLY has established an ongoing Memorial Project to safeguard certain key aspects of our Bahá'í heritage. Its aims are:

- To prepare and maintain a list of the graves of historically significant Bahá'ís in this country and their locations
- To establish their current condition.
- To take appropriate steps to improve the condition of those that need it.
- To foster in Bahá'í institutions an appreciation of the need for them to list in their own records the graves of Bahá'ís of national, regional and local significance in their area, to take steps to ensure they are cared for, and to remember the services of the persons interred, ensuring the history is not lost.
- To foster in the Friends an appreciation of this aspect of their Bahá'í history and heritage, and the example and inspiration of the early Believers.

Most of this work will be carried out directly on behalf of the National Spiritual Assembly. However the Assembly asks that each local community ensures that it has a record of the graves of its deceased members, particularly

those of historical significance such as the first pioneer or first declarant, and make sure that they are cared for.

Tranquillity Zones and Safety

January 9, 2002

DEARLY LOVED FRIENDS,

The National Spiritual Assembly has noted the growth in the number of Tranquillity Zones being held in various parts of the country and welcomes their use as one means whereby we might reach out into the wider community. However it seems that full safety measures are not always taken. The National Assembly feels strongly that the safety of those taking part in a Tranquillity Zone must be uppermost in the minds of the organisers, and all necessary safety measures must be taken.

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... there must be sufficient space for participants to move

For instance:

- The organisers of a Tranquillity Zone must check that they are covered by appropriate insurance policies.
- Candles and drapes can come together to make a fire hazard. They should be arranged to avoid this, and only fire-retardant materials should be used.
- For safety reasons there should be no candles on the floor, and only floating candles or enclosed ones should be used.
- There must be sufficient space for participants to move safely, which means a sensible limit on numbers.
- Clear standard fire exit signs should also be used.
- These safety precautions must be taken and sound common sense used in all arrangements.

Anyone organising a Tranquillity Zone is strongly recommended to obtain the full guidance issued by the National Spiritual Assembly. It can be accessed on the World-Wide Web at <http://www.tranquillity-zone.org.uk/>, or obtained in hard copy form from the National Office or electronically by sending an email to resources@bahai.org.uk or.

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