

## ISLAM: PLURALISM AND DIVERSITY IN THE UMMAH

### MILAD-E-NABI : CELEBRATION OF BIRTH OF PROPHET MOHAMED (PEACE BE UPON HIM)

*Coastweek* -- Six years ago The Aga Khan Council for Mombasa initiated and hosted annual Milad event in Mombasa .

Since then, every year there after, Milad-e-Nabi has been an annual event of pride and joy for the community, where Muslim Men and women from all sects and ethnic communities come together to celebrate Milad and reflect on the Life and Teachings of Prophet Mohamed (Peace be upon him) and refresh their understanding and practice of Faith, Peace and Harmony.

It is through this forum as the Milad-e-Nabi, that we try to bring together Both Regional and International Scholars from all Muslim orientations and traditions to one platform where they are able to share their Wisdom and knowledge, relating The Essence Of the Faith of Islam to The Challenges that The Future Beholds In a Global Society of Opportunities.

This year, Milad-e-Nabi was held at The Multipurpose Hall in beautiful environment of The Centre of Excellence, The Aga Khan Academy Mombasa.

It enhanced the brotherhood of Muslim Ummah through the intellectual discourse of the renowned Islamic Scholars representing different geographical locations around the world as well as different sects and schools of thoughts within Islam.

The Theme of this year was ISLAM : Pluralism and Diversity in the Ummah.

The discussions were focused on the reflection and celebration of Pluralism and Diversity of the Ummah.

The messages that came across clearly were, that whilst the different ethnic and cultural backgrounds as well as wide spread geographical locations and political affiliations make the Local and World Muslim Ummah diverse, this plurality is also bound by a unifying factor in the form of Prophet Mohamed (Peace be upon him) and his teachings.

The Speakers covered the concept exceptionally well and the audience was amazed and enlightened by the light of knowledge shared by the speakers.

Dr. Farouk Topan is a well renowned Islamic Scholar, writer and playwright.

He was Senior Lecturer and Chair of the Department of Africa at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London .

He has published on various aspects of Swahili literature, religion, spirit possession and identity in East Africa .

He has co-edited a book entitled Swahili Modernities.

Dr. Topan served at the Institute of Ismaili Studies from its inception in 1977 until 1993.

He is currently Chair of the Regional Committee of the Madrasa Programme in East Africa . Dr Topan spoke on "Islam and Plurality: Lessons for our times".

Dr. Gurdofarid Miskinzoda is a Research Associate and Shi'i Studies coordinator in the Department of Academic Re-search and Publications of Institute of Islamic Studies in London , UK .

Dr Gurdofarid obtained her Doctorate in the History of the Near and Middle East from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London .

Gurdofarid's areas of specialization are the study of Muslim literary and historical tradition, origins and early development of Islam and Shi'i Islam.

Her topic of discussion was "The Prophet Muhammad: the unifying core in the diversity and pluralism of Islam."

Professor Mohamed Hyder, a very well respected name in intellectual circles of East Africa and beyond Internationally, was kind enough to grace the occasion and talk on, "Islam: The Religion of People."

Mr Abdul Rahman Mwinyifaki, is an Islamic Scholar, Assistant Registrar at Kenyatta University Campus in Mombasa .

He spoke on the topic of "Al Quran" and emphasized on the importance of reading and understanding the Book of Allah.

Al Waez Shafin Verani performed the duties of Master of Ceremony.

He trained at The Institute of Ismaili Studies, London , UK . and completed an MBA from Karachi University , Pakistan .

He is currently with Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Board Nairobi Kenya .

The Milad was attended by prominent leaders and Members of the diverse Muslim Communities of Mombasa, who co-exist among the other Muslim sects and the wider Kenyan population in peace and harmony.

The event was also attended by many Muslim Business and Professional Men and Women.

The Aga Khan Council for Mombasa envision continuity of such forums.

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