

Chairperson's Annual Report – 2002

Maldivian Students' Association (UK)
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بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ



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اَشْرَفِ الْمُرْسَلِیْنَ . سَیْدِنَا مُحَمَّدٍ وَعَلٰی اٰلِهِ وَصَحْبِهِ اَجْمَعِیْنَ . اٰمِیْنَ .

السَّلَامُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Introduction

Our philosophy of operation, as determined by the objectives of the Association, has been primarily to establish and strengthen relationships among Maldivian students in the United Kingdom; look after the welfare of the members of the Association; and, to establish relationships between the Association and other cultural, student and youth organisations in and outside the United Kingdom.

Upon assumption of office as Chairperson of the Central Committee at the end of December 2001, I can distinctly remember telling members in my inaugural speech that the leadership of MSA(UK) cannot achieve much without the full cooperation and support of its members. In fact, if anything, we have very clearly seen what can be successfully accomplished and conversely what can be completely thwarted by the very actions of members.

We have achieved a lot where we received cooperation and support. In other areas, we cannot claim to have achieved much, especially where we had to depend on bureaucratic decision-making processes to respond. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation for those who selflessly sacrificed their valuable time and energy to realise the objectives of the Association, and at the same time I cannot condone those few elements within our membership who have spared no effort to ensure that the Association, especially the Central Committee, suffer all the hardships that they could muster at us during our tenure of office.

All credit for what we have achieved during my term of office goes to those members who have diligently contributed their time and effort to the betterment of MSA, and the toil and sweat of the Central Committee, without whose cooperation and understanding I could not have fulfilled my duties to any desirable extent.

EGM – Spring 2002

An Extra-Ordinary General Meeting was held in Spring 2002, at 9 Rosemont Avenue, London N12 0BY, on Saturday 30 March from 18:30 to 20:45 hrs. The EGM was attended by 24 members including four members of the CC. The Secretary of the Association was unable to attend because of other engagements. The EGM was conducted in a very amicable manner and members were uncharacteristically cooperative and supportive for which the CC is extremely grateful.

One of the accomplishments of the EGM was the discussion of a Terms of Reference for the proposed Advisory Council of the Association. Also, I would like to add that the remarkable success of giving the website of the Association a face-lift was a direct outcome of the suggestions from members during the EGM. In the meeting issues relating to designing a new MSA logo, revising guidelines for Rosemont, getting access to Maravalhi funds, and organising activities to welcome the Maldivian athletes participating in the forthcoming Commonwealth Games in Manchester were discussed. As an additional issue, members stressed on the importance of updating the constitution since the present one was badly in need of revision. Ahmed Afaal and Mohamed Muiz accepted the responsibility of preparing a draft revised constitution for possible submission and approval in the AGM at the end of the year.

After the meeting a sumptuous dinner was served, followed by a ten-pin bowling session. On the next day, Sunday 31 March, the traditional 'Big Match' was played between the London team and UK United (members from the rest of the cities). After an exciting match the result was a 1-1 draw. Members also enjoyed board and card games, a pool competition and other games, in a cordial and friendly atmosphere, upholding the spirit and purpose of the Association exemplarily.

MSA(UK) Funds

Towards the beginning of our term, on 2 February 2002, I wrote to the Ministry of Education requesting the Government to consider increasing the budget allocation from one thousand dollars to one thousand pounds. However, I received a reply from the Ministry, in April 2002, indicating that because of budget restrictions they were not able to increase the annual allocation. Since by mid-year we had not received the contribution,

I wrote again to the Ministry to expedite the payment. In fact, the Association did not receive its allocated funds from the Government until very late in the year, which meant that we had some outstanding debts by the end of the year.

The major outflows of funds were for the Spring EGM, the support for Maldivian athletes participating in the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, and this AGM. The activities we planned for the Commonwealth Games in Manchester depended heavily on obtaining extra sponsorship, and in this regard I would like to extend our gratitude to Universal Enterprises Limited who was the only organisation that responded to our plea for sponsorship, by making a direct payment to the Association account with £500 of which £6 were deducted as bank charges. Since we did not receive any response after writing to them as to how they would like us to promote them, we found it most appropriate to put a link on every page of our Commonwealth Games website, to the Universal Resorts main webpage.

Some money was spent on purchasing stationery and other expendables for the preparation of the athletes welcome banner and for travel expenses within and outside Manchester related to the Games. The details of accounts for 2001-02 can be found in the Statement of Affairs.

Maravalhi Funds

As the previous Central Committee had initiated obtaining the status of the Maravalhi Fund, we continued trying to transfer the funds to the UK so that we may utilise it for the welfare of the Association. In this regard, we are grateful to the previous Central Committee for updating us on the status of the Maravalhi project and its funds. However, at the end of the year, I am yet to receive any response from Hamid Shafeeu, who was identified as one of the principal people responsible for managing the fund, to whom I wrote a formal letter on behalf of the Association on 7 February 2002, on the matter.

MSA Discussion Group

All five members of the newly elected Central Committee were assumed responsibilities for moderation of the Association's discussion group which is accessed from msa@yahoogroups.com. I would like to thank the previous chairperson Abdulla Mausoom for facilitating this transition smoothly. In addition to me, the moderators were Ahmed Shafiu (Manchester), Aminath Muna (Leeds), Khadeeja Ismail (Loughborough), and Mohamed Shareef (Liverpool). Since this was the most convenient way to communicate between the Central Committee and the members, and also among members, we launched a comprehensive campaign in the Association's official webpage to encourage members to register in the discussion group, and by the end of the year there were 20 registered members on the group.

In general members used this discussion group responsibly and respectfully. However, despite my request to exercise restraint in trying to use the discussion group to unleash personal grudges against fellow members, unfortunately some members failed to act maturely. Therefore, to increase accountability and responsibility, registration in the discussion group should be more closely scrutinized and appropriate action taken against

those who abuse the opportunity or impinge on the rights and privileges of other members.

MSA Website: www.msa-uk.org

Mohamed Fazal (Cambridge) continued to be the webmaster of the official website of the Association until towards the end of the year. We are grateful to Fazal for having selflessly maintained and updated the website and the Association's e-zine *joospetty*, while it was still 'alive'. Also, I am thankful that Fazal has passed on the immense responsibility to the able hands of our new webmaster Ahmed Niyaz, based on his competence and dedication that he has demonstrated during the year. With the able guidance from Fazal, Niya has been primarily responsible for giving the website a much needed face-lift and for enabling the uploading of news, pictures and messages related to the activities of the Maldivian athletes participating in the Commonwealth Games in Manchester, from 23 July to 6 August 2002.

Support to Maldivian contingent participating in the XVII Commonwealth Games, Manchester, 25 July – 4 August 2002

The highlight of the year inevitably was MSA(UK) support to the Maldivian athletes and officials, who participated in the XVII Commonwealth Games held in Manchester. Among the activities, on behalf of MSA(UK), the Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the Treasurer received the President of the National Olympic Committee, Mohamed Zahir Naseer and was presented with a bouquet of flowers on his arrival at Manchester Airport, on 22 July. On 23 July, the main contingent was greeted on arrival at Manchester Airport by a banner which read, "Maldivian Students' Association (UK) welcomes the Maldivian athletes participating in the XVII Commonwealth Games, Manchester, 25 July – 6 August 2002". All the members of the Central Committee were among several other members of the Association, who cheered and greeted the contingent. A bouquet of flowers was presented to the Chef-de-Mission, Mohamed Mahid Shareef. The welcome by the Association was received with pleasant surprise and warmth by all the members of the Maldivian contingent.

MSA(UK) are proud that one athlete of the contingent, Mifzal Ahmed of the table tennis team, was a full member of the Association, when he participated in the Commonwealth Games.

The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and the official news-reporter of MSA(UK) for the Games, were invited to attend the official flag-hoisting reception held at the Athletes' Village on 24 July. Due to unprecedented demand, and because we were not able to secure the sponsorship in time to purchase tickets, none of our members were able to attend either the official Opening or Closing Ceremonies of the Games. However, the Association facilitated the entrance tickets to members to attend some events in the table-tennis matches played by the Maldivian team. Some members were also able to witness our two track athletes performing in their respective events.

After the main competitive games were over, in honour of the visiting contingent, the Association held a barbecue party, which was received warmly by the athletes with a lot of satisfaction and emotion. The athletes were also able to relax in the homely

atmosphere while enjoying the food and company of MSA(UK), the hosts. The athletes and officials autographed the welcome banner as a token of appreciation of the hospitality extended to them. Members of the Association were also invited to visit Knutsford, the host town for the Maldivian contingent, and were also represented at the BBC Studio in Manchester during an interview. In addition to these, the Association facilitated shopping and socialising events in and around Manchester for the visiting athletes and officials, as and when required.

Finally, MSA(UK) gave the Maldivian a fond farewell at Manchester Airport on 5 August where I had the pleasure of presenting a small plaque as a token of friendship to the Maldivian contingent's Chef-de-Mission, Mohamed Mahid Shareef.

In addition to all the members of the Central Committee several members assisted and participated in many of the activities organised on behalf of the Maldivian contingent. Special mention should be made of Shafiu, Nabaa and Mau, and Afaal who provided the Association with a conducive environment from which all the activities were coordinated, managed and monitored. Sharippe provided the news-team with a digital camera and assisted with the logistics, and finance together with Hajja. In addition, the presence and helpful assistance given by Thaw, Hasna, Hashma and Aree need recognition. I would also like to thank Afaal who sacrificed his time to take the primary responsibility of being our news reporter cum webpage developer during the Games coverage in our website, www.msa-uk.org/commonwealthgames which was appreciated and praised by Maldivians all over the world.

Golden Web Awards

We are delighted to congratulate the web-team of the Association, as the website of MSA(UK) was awarded the Golden Web Award 2002-2003, by the International Association of Webmasters and Designers, for design, originality and content having achieved levels of excellence deserving of recognition. Special mention must be made to both Fazal and Niya who have contributed in their capacities as webmasters of the website during my term of office, and whose continued dedication and enthusiasm have brought immense pleasure and delight to all members of the Association.

MSA E-Zine: 'Joospetty'

Due to lack of response and contribution *Joospetty* failed to be regularly published during the course of the year. In the form it was being published, as most of the contributions lacked originality and could have been accessed more easily elsewhere in the internet, members seem to have lost interest in *Joospetty* to a great extent. Therefore, it would be useful to determine what nature the magazine could take in the future and model it accordingly if we were to revive it to its former glory and acceptance, and to prevent it from following the same fate as its paper-based predecessor *Malas* during the late eighties.

Amendment of the Constitution

One of the tasks that were identified as needing attention during the EGM was amending the Constitution of MSA(UK). Afaal and Muiz volunteered to assist the Central Committee with the task. We are grateful to Afaal for having presented us with a draft of the amended Constitution which we are in the process of presenting to the members in the AGM for discussion and approval. Unfortunately, Muiz was unable to contribute to the task because of his busy schedule at the end of his programme of study in the UK.

Election of Advisory Council

One of the achievements of the EGM in Spring 2002 was the discussion and adoption of the Terms of Reference for an Advisory Council to assist the Central Committee in running the Association. We have now finalised these Terms of Reference and hopefully we would be able to elect the three members to the Advisory Council at this AGM.

Rosemont Guidelines and Regulations

As a result of several grievances received on the MSA(UK) discussion group, during May – June, regarding the management of funds raised from the stay of members at 9 Rosemont Avenue, the Central Committee decided to approach the matter sensibly and sensitively. Since most of the messages posted at the discussion group, pointed the finger at the Warden, whose exams were in progress, we delayed the process until the Warden, Abdulla Shareef (Jeku) had finished his exams.

On behalf of the Central Committee, the Secretary took the responsibility of looking into the matter, and she telephoned the Warden and requested the disclosure of income-expenses at Rosemont. The Warden responded in writing on 17 June to say that he cannot disclose the accounts, and that we should approach the Acting High Commissioner on that matter. I wrote a letter to the Acting High Commissioner, HE Adam Hassan, on 21 June, regarding the matter and he referred the matter to the Ministry of Education.

While on study leave to undertake my research fieldwork in Malé, I informally discussed the matter with the Deputy Minister, Dr Mahamood Shougee, who has indicated that the Minister, Hon. Dr Mohamed Latheef, did not take any decision on the matter before he left office to take up the post of Permanent Representative at the United Nations.

The CC has nevertheless prepared a revised version of the Rosemont Regulations to ensure financial accountability of the Warden, and to make it obligatory to disclose accounts regularly, on the demand of the Central Committee, or if requested by members. The revised version will be submitted to the AGM for comments and amendments by members, and hopefully subsequently approved by the Ministry of Education and the High Commission, by the incoming Central Committee.

Redesigning MSA Logo

One of the activities initiated by the previous Central Committee that needed to be followed up was the modernisation of the logo of the Association to reflect the objectives of MSA(UK). After discussion in the EGM in Spring 2002, members supported the idea of logo designing competition, with a winner's prize of £50. The CC drafted rules and regulations of the competition and invited members to submit designs to the CC by the first of October. However, presumably as a result of intensive campaigns against designing a new logo, we failed to receive any entries to the competition by the closing deadline. Ahmed Niyaz presented some designs, but since they were submitted after the closing date, I found it unfair and inappropriate to consider them for evaluation. I personally believe that the logo should be redesigned to reflect the objectives of the Association and present MSA(UK) with a vibrant, dynamic and lively outlook.

Help and Advice to Students

Wherever possible we have been actively assisting students in need and lending a helping hand. The Student Advisor, Mohamed Shareef (Sharippé), has directed some members to sources of funding on their request, and provided general guidance and advice on several matters during the course of the year. The Warden has also been extremely helpful in welcoming some new members, as 9 Rosemont Avenue, occasionally becomes the first point of call for new arrivals to the UK. I would like to appreciate and acknowledge the role of the Warden on this matter, and hope that the Warden would continue welcoming new members and introducing them to the MSA(UK) and its activities.

Welcoming the New Members

Because of the low turnout of members to the Welcome Reception for New Members during the previous year, it was decided after careful deliberation not to hold such a reception this year. Some members had indicated in the discussion group that it would be very inconvenient to travel long distances for a '*roadha veellun*', and therefore, it was felt that the AGM will provide a much better opportunity for new members to meet each other and build lasting friendships. However, new members have been advised and urged to register in the membership database and in the msa@yahoogroups discussion group in order to keep up to date with activities of the Association.

Membership Database

The ideas of establishing a database have been discussed on a number of occasions. The compilation of database has begun and is in progress. The registration database was fully developed and implemented during the term of office, and all new members are being urged and advised to register to receive notification of activities, and to benefit from exchanging ideas, comments and suggestions on improving the services of the Association to its members.

Constraints and Bottlenecks

The most serious constraint we have is that of non-response from authorities regarding the disclosure of Rosemont accounts. But hopefully, after the submission and approval of the new Guidelines and Regulations at the AGM, we could request the Government to approve these and make it mandatory for the Warden to disclose the accounts regularly, or on demand from members or the Central Committee.

Secondly, my concerns are that there are several elements within our Association who are set to sabotage whatever activities planned by the Central Committee. Whilst, I can appreciate the democratic right to free speech and expression, I believe that they should also respect and uphold the democratic systems of decision-making and governance. Otherwise, the purpose of having an Association and election of Central Committee and office bearers would lead to chaos and mayhem, and we will achieve nothing meaningful.

Outlook

We step down from the Central Committee, on the fervent hope that the new central committee will proceed to uphold the objectives of the Association and provide a continuum by pursuing the tasks that we have started to completion, together with new initiatives and activities to the betterment of the Association.

- Improve and update the Constitution to reflect the conditions and circumstances of the increased student population and needs of the members;
- Amend the Rosemont Guidance Regulations to increase financial accountability of the Warden, and improve the conditions of the place to make it more conducive, for students' stay and act as the central headquarters of the Association;
- Approve the Terms of Reference of the Advisory Council and proceed with the election of the 3 member Advisory Council to facilitate the smooth running of the Association.
- Further develop, update and upgrade the official website of the Association;
- Update the student database on the website with portfolios of students' achievements, honours and accomplishments;
- Compile the proposed 'Hall-of-Fame' on the website;
- Pursue the modernisation of the MSA(UK) logo to reflect the vibrancy, liveliness and dynamism of the Association;
- Pursue securing the funds generated by the 'Maravalhi' project for utilisation to the benefit of the Association.
- Continue to maintain the inventory.
- Determine the future of the MSA e-zine 'Joospetty'.
- Continue to maintain the MSA discussion group and ensure by strict moderation, that democratic rights are upheld and members do not abuse the facility in anyway to their personal gain or to undermine the credibility of other members.

Conclusion

We have achieved a lot, accomplished much and initiated some welcome changes. We wish we had more time and cooperation to achieve more for the betterment of MSA(UK). It has been an honour, a privilege and a pleasure to be of service to MSA(UK) during the year 2002. On behalf of the Central Committee, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to all members who assisted us in taking MSA(UK) towards the common objective of continued betterment for members.

Thank you,

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

Yours Sincerely,

Ali Haidar Ahmad
Chairperson, MSA(UK)
29 Dec. 2001 – 28 Dec. 2002