

FPZAI West Zone meet December 2008

Today's Bombay Samachar Sunday 28/12/2008 carries an edited version of the report by me in Parsi Tari Arsi column. Here is the full text of the report for your information
Marzban Giara

FPZAI West Zone Meet December 2008

A meeting of the Anjumans of Gujarat was held at Bardoli on Sunday 21st December 2008. Mr. Areez Khambatta, Vice President of West Zone B, Federation of Parsi Zoroastrian Anjumans of India presided. Dasturji Cyrus Noshirwan Dastoor of Surat was the chief guest. Representatives of Bardoli, Billimora, Davier, Khergam, Mahuva, Nargol, Navsari MalesarBehdin Anjuman, Saronda, Sigapor, Tavri, Vyara-Songadh anjumans were present.

The newly elected trustees of the Bombay Parsee Panchayat Mr. Dinshaw Rusi Mehta, President and trustees Khojeste Mistree and Yazdi Desai were felicitated by various anjumans as also by Dasturji Cyrus Dastoor, Mr. Areez Khambatta and Zoroastrian Women's Assembly of Surat (ZAWAS). The other four BPP trustees could not make it to Bardoli. Dasturji Cyrus Dastoor expressed the hope that the new BPP trustees will solve the Parsi community's problems and transform negative thinking into positive action. He urged the new trustees to meet the challenges and make the community strong, work selflessly and fulfill their promises to the Parsi community. May Ahura Mazda bless the new BPP trustees to preserve the Parsi Zoroastrian identity.

BPP President Mr. Dinshaw Mehta appealed for unity to strengthen the traditions for the greater good of the community. He requested all to work in cooperation and avoid confrontation. Trustee Khojeste Mistree said: "We should seize the opportunity and show in the next seven years by our actions what we can do. We will preserve our race and religion. Religion is linked to our very being. The Parsi community has given a mandate to preserve traditions. Be proud of your religion and strengthen our community." Trustee Yazdi Desai quoting Swami Vivekanand said; "Work together to build India . Let us have faith in our past and bring back glory to the Parsi community."

Among those felicitated were Miss Dilshad Palia, Miss Surat 2007 runner up; Mr. Khushru Kasad, caterer; Adil Palia, umpire for over 40 Ranji Trophy matches, Hanoz B. Kasad, Guinness Book record holder for Karate feat. Miss Pearl Daboo of Surat was the master of ceremonies for the felicitation function in the morning.

After a delicious lunch, the representatives of Gujarat anjumans held a meeting presided over by Mr. Areez Khambatta, Vice President West Zone B of the Federation (FPZAI).. He suggested that representatives of anjumans must get involved and assert themselves. BPP looks after poor Parsis in Mumbai. Mr. Khambatta mooted the idea of a Parsi Amelioration Scheme where the richer anjumans will help the poorer anjumans. FPZAI will give a subsidy of Rs.500/- per month per family whose family income is less than Rs.5,000/- per month. Mr. Khambatta is handling the problem of Rajkot as a defunct anjuman.

Mr. Dara Deboo of Navsari Malesar Behdin Anjuman said: "Educational institutions funded by Parsis should be publicized and patronised. FPZAI should appoint a committee to study the trust deeds of such institutions and gather information about provisions for Parsi students."

Mr. Percy Buhariwalla of Vyara stated that Gujarat government has allocated Rs.100 crores for measurement of land area of properties. Details could be obtained from the website of Gujarat government. He requested all Gujarat anjumans to avail of this opportunity and have their land assets measured. Reservations are coming on dokhma lands in small villages. He cited a case where land worth Rs..4 crores is placed under reservation in Navsari. Smaller anjumans need legal aid from FPZAI.

Vyara anjuman needs funds for fencing dokhma lands. He also suggested publicising the Supreme Court judgment in the case won by Ahmedabad Parsi Panchayat that Trust property housing is for Parsis only. Mr. Hoshang Wania of Nargol urged that we need to get rid of our lethargy and be alert. Each anjuman must have one vote per anjuman regardless of the number of its members. Smaller anjumans should not be bullied by the bigger anjumans. Each anjuman must pay up its subscription and send it to Mr. Cawas Panthaki, Sr. Executive (Welfare), Bombay Parsee Panchayat with a covering letter and obtain acknowledgment.

Mr. Bahadur Jokhi, President of Vyara-Songadh Anjuman suggested that a powerful leader such as Mr. Areer Khambatta needs to be reelected as Vice President of FPZAI. He proposed the nomination of Mr. Areez Khambatta as Vice President, West Zone B for the next term. This was seconded by Mr. Hoshang Wania, President of Nargol anjuman. All representatives present were in favour of the nomination except one who mentioned that he would have to consult his co-trustees. Mr. Jokhi asserted that the Executive Council does not have the authority to change the Rules. That authority rests only with the general body. Several representatives criticised the move by the Executive Council to change the Rules and assign only 0.1% vote to smaller anjumans based on the number of their members. That would marginalize and stifle the smaller anjumans and go against the very purpose of the Federation.

Mr. Marzban Giara who was invited as a press representative made the following suggestions:

1. Reservation of seats in educational institutions founded/funded by Parsis. Details of such institutions with dates, amount and donor's name have been provided by him to the National Minorities Commission as also to the Bombay Parsee Panchayat and to Mr. Areez Khambatta. Both the late Lt. Gen. Adi Sethna and Dr. Miss Mehru Bengalee have forwarded the same to the Government of India and Govt. Of Maharashtra . He urged Mr. Khambatta to use his contacts with the Gujarat government to obtain a few seats for Parsi students in institutions founded/funded by Parsis. The study conducted by TISS researchers under PARZOR project has also highlighted that Parsi students need reservations in educational institutions in the light of reservations for scheduled castes and OBCs because of which even our merit students are unable to secure admission to colleges.

2. Setting up of an Information Resource Centre. Such a centre would provide information about various opportunities available for education, employment, careers, marriage, funds, etc. The BPP could consider appointing an information officer just like the PRO.

3. A Directory of Opportunities for Parsis can be compiled detailing about each institution/organization/ association the name, address, tel. no., e-mail address, contact person, amenities/facilities/ services provided. Such information could also be put on a website and also publicised in the colonies/baughs, Parsi press.

Mr. Giara suggested that the Parsi press needs to play a positive role by focussing on the opportunities and publicise the good points of the community rather than blowing up the controversies. The meeting terminated with a vote of thanks to the chair and to Bardoli and Vyara anjumans for making arrangements for its success.