



INDIA ISLAMIC CENTER'S OVERSEAS CHAPTER INAUGURATED

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Indian Minister of Minority Affairs K. Rahman Khan inaugurated an overseas chapter of the New Delhi-based India Islamic Cultural Center (IICC) here Thursday night. The center will be tasked with building two buildings for the center in the northern Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

Khan also launched a membership drive for the IICC, the apex Islamic center, which has a mandate to provide a unified platform for promoting Islamic heritage and interfaith harmony in that Asian country.

“The IICC is a major organization that seeks to promote mutual understanding and peace amongst the people of India on cardinal principles of human values,” said Minister Khan, while speaking at a crowded ceremony, that was organized to felicitate the minister and to launch the IICC campaign.

Those who spoke on the occasion included Sirajuddin Qureshi, IICC president; Chaudhary Mahboob Ali Qaiser, president of the Bihar Pradesh Congress Committee; and a prominent community leader Nadeem Tarin, who is also the chairman of the Delhi Public School and Dunes Public School.

The man behind the ICC campaign, Murshid Kamal, set the tone of the mega event that concluded in the wee hours yesterday. More than 400 prominent Indian expatriates from different walks of life gathered at the launching ceremony. Community leaders including Ali Siddiqui, S. Muneer Ahmed, Javed Hussain, Ziauddin Ahmed, Naushad Alam, Kaunain Shahidi, Ghizal Mehdi, Laique Azam, Asif Iqbal and Abdul Ghani were instrumental while organizing the event. A visual presentation about the ICC was also made on the occasion.

Earlier, Tarin hosted a luncheon reception for Minister Khan at his house. Sibi Geore, deputy chief of the Indian mission, attended the reception.

In his keynote address, Minister Khan blamed his co-religionists for “the morass of degradation in which they have fallen today.” “No government can do anything good for you until you wake up from the deep slumber and exert efforts to achieve your goals of upliftment in all fields — political, economic and educational,” added the minister. He said that his ministry had taken several initiatives for the welfare of India’s minorities, which are about 19 percent of the India's population.

He noted that the Ministry of Minority Affairs headed by him has finalized plans to set up five new universities in India for minorities.

“This will eventually help Muslims and they will be largest beneficiary as they represent more than 70 percent of the total population of minorities in India,” he observed. He said that the Indian government will not backtrack on the issue of establishing a university in the name of Tipu Sultan for minorities in the Indian state of Karnataka. He said, “New Delhi has decided to establish five minorities’ universities in India including one in Karnataka.”

He pointed out that these universities will reserve 50 percent of the total seats and the facilities for minorities, who include Buddhists, Jains, Christians and Parsis besides Muslims.

“It is wrong to say that only Muslims will get admissions in these universities,” he said, adding that remaining 50 percent of the seats will be in general pool. This is in addition to the decision taken by the Indian government to establish 100 higher primary schools on the lines of Kendriya Vidyalaya to be managed by Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad Foundation.

“The Ministry of Minority Affairs itself symbolizes a step forward toward implementation of several recommendations,” said Khan, adding that many people are not aware of the progress made by the government in terms of the implementation of the recommendations.

Referring to the millions of dollars worth of wakf properties in India, he said: “There was an urgent need to introduce reforms in this sector.” To this end, he noted that the provincial wakf boards will be digitalize soon to ensure collection of full information and data about the 400,000 acres of land that fall under the jurisdiction of wakf institutions across India. The minister also highlighted the emerging role of the Central Wakf Council of India.

He pointed out that his government has identified 90 districts in India as Muslim concentrated districts. Muslim population in these districts is about 25 percent of the total population, he disclosed, adding that each district will get substantial amount of funds for providing facilities to minorities under the area development plan of the ministry.

Speaking on the occasion, IICC chief Qureshi said, “There is a need to generate more awareness about the schemes launched by the government for minorities.” He said that the membership to the IICC is almost closed for those living in India. But the IICC has decided to enroll some NRIs as members in a gesture to support Indian expatriates and to provide them lodging, convention and networking facilities in the Indian capital city. He also read out the names of 22 new members, who are later called on the dais for a souvenir group photography with the minister and the IICC president. Chaudhary Mahboob Ali Qaiser said, “The twin event — felicitation of the minister and launching of the IICC overseas chapter — reflect your keen interest in the affairs of India and your love for your homeland.”



Tarin applauded the genuine efforts made by Minister Khan for the upliftment of minorities, especially Muslims in India. He also spoke about the IICC, whose chapters once set up in Patna and Lucknow, will go a long way in helping the Muslims of those two states. “There is a great potential among about 2.1 million Indian expatriates living in Saudi Arabia, whose help is vital for the implementation of projects like the IICC chapters in Patna, Lucknow and other states of India” said Kamal, a member of the IICC working panel in Riyadh.

Kamal pointed out that a 10-member working committee has been constituted by prominent community members to represent the IICC in the Kingdom. He said that the main objective of establishing Saudi chapter is to expand the base of IICC in India and initiate its membership drive in the Kingdom. The IICC will also work closely with the local community leaders in India to establish center’s regional chapter on the pattern of IICC, New Delhi, he said, while referring to Patna chapter, where the panel is talking to state government in this regard.

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