

# JAUHAR

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## Crystal Gazing

They might come from the smallest towns of India but science students at Jamia are attempting to unravel the biggest puzzles of universe

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◆9 Faculties ◆37 Departments ◆27 Centres of Excellence and Research ◆231 Courses ◆642 Faculty Members  
◆Over 15,000 Undergraduate, Post-Graduate and Diploma/Certificate Students

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**Maulana Mohamed Ali 'Jauhar'**  
Founder, Jamia Millia Islamia

## From the Vice-Chancellor

**T**his copy of *Jauhar* coincides with the annual convocation of the University. My best wishes go out to students who would be leaving us and stepping out to embrace a new turn in life. We hope and pray that they have a successful life ahead and that they will indeed retain their connections with the University in the years to come. All good universities have an active alumni base, as does Jamia, with its very active chapters in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. We need to strengthen this network further.

The good news for the University is that we are on the threshold of adding roughly 45 acres of land to our campus. This land that has been acquired by the Government of Delhi for the University will give us room to set up new departments and improve our existing facilities. The University Grants Commission has approved the setting up of a cutting-edge Centre for Nanotechnology besides a China Studies and an Afghan Studies Programme. These, in addition to the Area Studies Programmes on Central Asia, Africa, Bangladesh and West Asia, will further bolster Jamia's Academy of International Studies.

The University is determined to maintain its pace in infrastructural development. A new hostel to accommodate 370 boys is being built while work on a 390-seater hostel for girls will begin shortly. The boys' hostel will be equipped with a state of the art gymnasium.

In the coming weeks, our students will be busy preparing for the semester or half-yearly exams. I wish them all the best.

**Najeeb Jung**  
Vice-Chancellor



# Crystal Gazing

Thronging Jamia from qasbas and villages of India, research scholars reach for the stars, delving deep into the mysteries of life

*Studies on the Effects of DNA Minor Groove-Binding Ligands on Mitochondria Structure Function in Irradiated Mammalian Cells*

**By Mohammad Athar (Centre for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences)**

Well, if you shook your head in uncomprehending puzzlement at the title of this PhD thesis, it isn't surprising. The good news is this: the areas which Jamia's research scholars are exploring are of direct relevance — and benefit — to us. The topics concern the building blocks of our universe and of our life — atoms and cells — and seek to answer the biggest puzzles of creation by studying these tiniest of tiny entities.

Questions which intrigue us are also what are uppermost on the minds of these young scientists: How

did the universe come into existence, what was the Big Bang, what's the future of our solar system, how did humans evolve, what is the genesis of various diseases, what causes sleep (and sleep disorder)...

These research scholars are primarily associated with the Faculty of Natural Sciences, under which are the Departments of Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Geography, Bioscience, Computer Science and Biotechnology, or with the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, Centre for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences (CPRSc), the Centre for Theoretical Physics (CTP) or the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Basic Sciences (CPRSc). The University is at the hub of pioneering and often cross-disciplinary research in the natural and life sciences, forging collaborations with institutions within the country and outside in its quest for excellence in frontier research.

## Of human bondage

Take Mohammad Athar's case. A graduate from Magadh University, Bodhgaya, and a postgraduate in Biochemistry from Jamia Hamdard, Athar has been associated with the Institute of Nuclear Medicine & Allied Sciences—Defence Research and Development Organisation (INMAS-DRDO), an institute carrying out pioneering work in Radiation Biology and one that has among the best facilities for research in cell biology. However, as INMAS does not provide a degree, Athar chose to pursue his doctorate at Jamia. Athar has been working in the area of cancer cells and chemotherapy. As he says, "Chemotherapy and radiation do not manage to kill all the cancer cells. Some cancer cells still survive." His work relates to an element called 'ligand' that has the ability to bind itself to DNA and has radio-protection properties. It can also clean mitochondrial DNA while killing the cancer cells. His study is, therefore, of immense importance for cancer therapy.





Shamama Nishat, a science graduate from Aligarh Muslim University and postgraduate in Toxicology from Jamia Hamdard, brings her expertise to the Department of Bioscience to understand another problem — cardiovascular disease, which, she says, is common among diabetics. The transition from Chemistry & Toxicology to Life Sciences has been rather seamless for Shamama. She is now looking to understand the signalling mechanism that exists on the receptor walls of cells. “In the case of diabetes, cells react in a certain way, which is why blood vessels tend to stiffen. By trying to understand how it happens, we can ease the constriction of blood vessels,” she says. Interestingly, she will carry out part of this research at Hamburg University Hospital, on invitation from DAAD (Deutscher Akademischer Austausch Dienst), or the German Academic Exchange Service.

Shabana Urooj has just completed her doctorate on ‘Design and Development of Computer-based Biophysical Model for Diagnosis of Pulmonary Edema, an area of inter-disciplinary research, at the Faculty of Engineering. Shabana, a BTech in Electrical and an MTech in Electrical (Instrumentation and Control) from AMU, got interested in Biomedical Instrumentation during her MTech days. Edema is accumulation of excess fluid in body tissue while pulmonary edema means collection of excess fluid in the lungs. “Because of this serious lung disorder one may lose his/her life if the quantity of fluid retention is not controlled. Estimating the quantity of fluid is challenging because it can be measured only when it is sucked out. I have designed and created a model with the help of LabVIEW software that can calculate the exact amount of fluid and is, therefore, potentially life-saving. In accomplishing it, I have used some basic electrical engineering laws and principles,” says Shabana, referring to the work she carried out for her PhD. To achieve all this, Shabana had approached DRDO for an instrument called ‘Bioimpedance Analyser’, and the All India Institute of Medical Sciences for collection of data on patients.

At the Centre for Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Sciences, Mohammad Dilshad Manzar is working on ‘Electrophysiology and Immunological Sleep Studies in Humans’. Describing his area of research, he says, “Sleep constitutes about a third of the human life cycle and is a critical function of our health. However, research on sleep is still in infantile stage in our country and there is widespread ignorance and apathy among people and health professionals about sleep health issues... My research is based on what is called the sleep-immune system interaction theory. Sleep problems are usually associated with complaints of pain and body ache. I am trying to identify the molecular players of pain and/or inflammation by analysing the pattern of some of the known inflammatory markers in cases of poor sleep quality.”

This requires overnight recording of parameters like EEG (3 channels), EOG (2 channels), EMG (2 channels), ECG (2 channels), O<sub>2</sub> saturation, abdominal and thoracic breathing efforts, limb movements and body position. Besides, a researcher must monitor ambient temperature, humidity, air velocity, and intensity of light and sound throughout the recording of the sleep. The Centre has established a sleep laboratory with a grant from the UGC and has a spectrophotometer, an Elisa reader, an instrument to measure ambient temperature, humidity, air velocity, light and sound intensity, a freezer (-20°C), a pH meter, microscopes, a laminar hood, a centrifuge and instruments to measure anthropometry.

### Earthly concerns

Research is also being carried out on the vicious cycle of human activities leading to environmental degradation, which, in turn, is causing human ailments. At the Department of Biotechnology, Pratima is doing a PhD on ‘Detection of Bio-Available Arsenic by Whole Cell-based Biosensor’. Describing her interest, this postgraduate in Zoology from the University of Delhi says, “Water is the key requirement for living and a whole population can be affected gener-

**Science in human service: (From left) Pratima, Sajid Yousuf Bhatt and Mohammad Salman Akhtar. Facing page: (clockwise) Shamama Nishat, Mohammad Dilshad Manzar and Rekha Gupta**



ation after generation if it consumes arsenic-laced water. Therefore, monitoring water quality is essential. However, before effective removal technologies can be applied we would need to know the amount of pollutant concentration in a given sample. Therefore, I took up the task of detecting arsenic ions by the simplest and cheapest biological method.”

Grappling with methods applied in genetic engineering, Pratima has now designed a bacteria, which, when incubated with a water sample will produce a light signal, indicating the presence/absence of arsenic ions. It will also help scientists determine its quantity.

For her work, the infrastructure required was available at the Gene Expression Laboratory in Jamia, though she also accessed the instrumentation facilities of the National Institute of Health and Family Welfare, New Delhi.

### Web of Life

Another set of scholars are devising mechanisms to make human work-life more efficient, using information technology!

At the Department of Computer Science, Sajid Yousuf Bhatt is working on ‘A Structural Data Mining Framework for Social Network Analysis’. An

MCA from Kashmir University, Bhatt is examining the behavioural aspects of social networks, using tools of computer science that make it possible to decipher large amounts of data. Individuals are ‘nodes’ in a social network and Bhatt is seeking to understand the nodes that influence social behaviour in a given group; the sentiments and preferences of that group; the marketing strategy being used in a group and the specific nodes being targeted thereof. The relevance of this work, which Bhatt alternatively calls ‘opinion mining’ and ‘sentimental analysis’ is all-pervasive, what with security and privacy concerns emerging as areas of paramount global importance. His work is of significant contemporary salience because today revolutions are being facilitated by social networking sites!

Rekha Gupta, who did her Bachelor’s from NIIT Bhopal and followed it up with an MS from BITS Pilani, has begun a doctorate on ‘ERP Implementation Issues: CSF study and Selection Models’ at the Centre for Information Technology (CIT). Her work pertains to ERP, about which she says, “In all workplaces, including Government departments, corporates and educational institutes, a lot of information has to be exchanged across departments. ERP is a software which integrates information flow across various departments. This is a mammoth effort, which requires users’ requirements to be fed into software. One mistake and you pay a huge penalty in terms of escalating costs.” She is lucky to be at the right place for this area of research, for Jamia recently won the award for the best ‘e-campus’ in the country. The best experts in the field are, therefore, her guides.

Gulfam Ahamad is working on a ‘Web-Based System for Sports Education’ at CIT. A graduate from Saharanpur and an MCA from Sahibabad, Gulfam expresses surprise that in times when so much can be learnt off the internet, there is little in the area of e-learning in physical education. “Even African countries have a lot of resources in the area, whereas we don’t even have a white paper.” The work that he has started will result in a dedicated portal, which will help in talent identification using IT; help users determine via an aptitude test the sport they are suited for; connect coaches and experts to those aspiring for a career in sport; and provide information about sport and sportsmen right till the district level.

At the Department of Computer Science, Muqeem Ahmad is working on the ‘Development of a Knowledge-Based Grid in Semantic Web’, which is an intelligent and sustainable internet application

## OTHER CATALYSTS

### Some research themes at Jamia: A quick primer

#### Centre for Interdisciplinary Research in Basic Sciences

- A Mathematical Study as Drug Release Mechanism from Controlled Release System by **Shafeeq T**
- Evaluation of Toxicity and Fertility Regulation in Rats by a Few Medicinal Plants by **Abu Hasnath Md Golam**
- Noise, Coupling Mechanisms and Synchronisation: Application to the Dynamics of Cell Cycle Regulation by **Heisman Dinachandra Singh**

#### Faculty of Engineering and Technology

- Electricity Demand Forecasting Techniques by **Muhammad Muazzam**
- Role of Tariff in a Sustainable Power System by **Prabhakar Tiwari**
- Fault Identifications in Power Systems Using Soft Computing Techniques by **Rajveer Singh**
- Techno-Economic Feasibility Analysis of Solar Energy Based Distributed Generation System by **Sheeraz Kirmani**

#### Department of Applied Science and Humanities, Faculty of Engineering and Technology

- Physiochemical and toxicological Studies of Ground water and water bodies in rural areas of Delhi and removal of toxic elements by using different absorbents by **Mohammad Aslam**
- In-vitro Antimicrobial Activity and Phytochemical Analysis of Different Plant Extracts by **Sheikh Imran Ahmad**



**Lords of the Lab:**  
(from left)  
**Shabana Urooj,**  
**Amna Ali,**  
**Gulfam Ahamad**  
**and Remya Nair**

environment that enables people or virtual roles to effectively capture, coordinate, publish, understand, share and manage knowledge resources. It provides on-demand and robust services to support innovation, cooperative teamwork and problem solving.”

### The final frontier

While IT scholars are reflecting on data in the web domain, physics enthusiast Remya Nair has set her sights on decoding cosmic puzzles through her PhD thesis ‘Cosmological Acceleration: Theoretical Models and Observational Constraints’ at the Centre for Theoretical Physics (CTP). The title is interesting, for she says, “A lot of data is coming in for cosmological observation. Earlier there was hardly any data to test theories.” Thus, if scientists earlier believed that the rate of expansion of the universe was slowing, today they assert that it is actually accelerating. Remya’s task is to understand why it is expanding, by creating a model and verifying it through statistical analysis.

Remya, who did an MSc in Physics from Jamia, is convinced about the immense possibilities in research in this field. She has extensively interacted with scientists during the numerous conferences she has attended at Jamia and elsewhere. She has also been to the SERC School on Astronomy and Astrophysics at NCRA, Pune; the IIA-Penn State Astrophysics School at IIA Bangalore; IUCAA School on Gravitation and Astrophysics at Jamia; and has attended the Indo-Japan Workshop at CTP.

Shamama’s ‘exploration’ outside Jamia includes a review titled ‘A1 Adenosine Receptor Signalling and Therapeutic Target in Diabetes’, published in the *International Journal of Pharmaceutical and Biological Archives-2011*; and the best poster award at the Diabetes India International Conference-2011, held in New Delhi, winning a reward of Rs. 10,000. In both the works, Hiba Shabir from the same department was her co-author.

Shabana, now an Assistant Professor at the School of Engineering, Gautam Buddha University,

has co-authored many research papers, including ‘Measurement of Thoracic Impedance and Approximations: A Diagnosis Technique for Clinical Utilisation’, in the *International Journal of Industrial & Applied Mathematics*, a Taylor & Francis title; and ‘A Microprocessor-based System for Non-Invasive Measurement of High Altitude Pulmonary Edema’, in *Aviation, Space and Environmental Medicine*, the official journal of the Aerospace Medical Association.

### Small town, big dreams

Interestingly, this body of path-breaking work has come not necessarily from those who have had access to privileged educational or economic backgrounds. Manzar’s journey typifies this. Hailing from Gulzarbag Karihara in Samastipur district of Bihar, he led a life of deprivation and struggle on account of his father’s ailment, and yet passed major tests like GATE and CSIR-UGC NET.

Amna Ali, a research scholar at CTP, who is working on ‘Inflation, Dark Energy and its Possible Alternatives’, hails from Bhagalpur and came to Delhi to chase her dreams. Amna was actively encouraged by her parents. Her horizons have widened, thanks to the exposure she has had to a faculty doing world-class work (read our story *Heart of Darkness*) and the chance to participate in the Summer School of Sub-Nuclear Physics, Erice, Italy, in 2007. Amna is now contemplating a post-doctoral from Saha Institute. Mohammad Salman Akhtar, who is doing a PhD on ‘Molecular Analysis of Oncogene and Tumour Suppressor Gene in Indian Female Breast Cancer Patients’, hails from Araria district of Bihar, schooled in Araria and Patna, and graduated from AMU. Remya, who did her MSc Physics in Jamia, has now won a JRF.

Bhatt hails from Kashmir and plans to go back to his home state and teach there, though he is aware that after his PhD, he can ‘mine’ a gold field at Google, Yahoo or Facebook! ♦



# ‘We protect our secular values fiercely’

Jamia Millia committed to a modernist worldview, says Vice-Chancellor on Foundation Day

**W**e at Jamia protect our secular values fiercely. The minority status granted to the University in early 2011 is a hand-holding act on the part of the Government, for which Jamia is grateful... The University encourages cutting edge technological research, but sadly the world outside does not know of its facilities.” These thoughts were expressed by Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung on the 91st Foundation Day on October 29. Minister of State for Information and Communication Sachin Pilot commended Jamia for its culture of diversity on the occasion. Pilot took the guard of honour from NCC cadets and hoisted the flag. The event each year is conducted by Jamia Middle School students with great élan.

As part of the celebrations, the University also hosted a Special Lecture on ‘Youth for Democracy and Secularism’ by Sitaram Yechuri. He talked of the different visions that different groups have had of the nation right since its inception. He said these diverse visions continue to frame the debates surrounding nation-building even today. However, he under-



scored the importance of democracy and secularism as a counter to sectarian principles. He added that these values needed to be accompanied by economic empowerment too. ♦

# Best e-campus award for Jamia

University’s File Tracking System judged as the best IT project among all universities in the country

**J**amia Millia Islamia won the Best ICT Enabled Higher Education Institute of the Year at the World Education Awards, instituted by Digital Learning, at the World Education Summit in July 2011.

The File Tracking System developed by the FTK-Centre for Information Technology, Jamia Millia Islamia, attempts to facilitate users track their files using their computers and identify pressure points in the system. Within nine months of its implementation, the system has compiled information on 49,969 unique files created by University users. As system usage continues to grow, it would provide useful data for analysis of organisational processes and ideas for their improvement. The system is capable of providing information on the movement of files through different offices, with date and action taken note, the



**Prof. Z.H. Khan (L) receiving the award. Also seen is former cricketer (2nd from R) K. Srikanth**

departments which receive/send files, and the average hops per file in the University etc.

The award was given away by then IGNOU VC Prof. Rajasekharan Pillai to Prof. Z.H. Khan, Director, FTK Centre for Information Technology. ♦



# Circle of violence

'Laws alone cannot help prevent atrocities against women, society must be bound by social contract...'

Violence against women is an epidemic fostered by the human mind and body and one that has been perpetuated for centuries. There is no one prescription to eradicate it... At a time when we claim that this century belongs to women, girl children are not even being allowed to be born," said Dr. Ranjana Kumari, President, Women Power Connect and Director, Centre for Social Research, New Delhi, while delivering her keynote address at the 'International Seminar on Gender, Violence and Development: The South Asian Experiences', organised by the Department of Sociology, Jamia Millia Islamia, on October 12-13.

Dr. Kumari discussed the wide spectrum of violence engendered by caste, religion, armed conflicts, economic deprivation, inequity in man-woman relationships and even woman-woman relationships.

Emphasising that laws alone cannot help solve the problem, she called for a social contract whereby each individual would agree to refrain from inflicting violence on any other human being.

She also urged the gathering to stand up for those who have been silent victims of violence, as suffering in silence is excruciating and widespread.

Mohini Anjum, who had had a long association with the Department of Sociology, said that violence was often surrounded by silence because of shame associated with it. Violence was also accepted as normal, even by the victims, "How do we change the mindset of women who take it as normal?" she wondered.

Prof. Maithree Wickramasinghe from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, made a powerful point on the social and economic costs of violence inflicted on women. ♦

## Policy and perspective

Two new programmes on China and Afghanistan

Jamia Millia Islamia will soon establish a China Studies Centre and an Afghanistan Studies Centre. These centres have been sanctioned by the UGC under the scheme of Area Study Centres.

The objective is to help develop and promote an Indian understanding of China and Afghanistan in a historical framework as well as from a contemporary perspective. The centres will

encourage interdisciplinary research, focusing on the history, sociology, politics, economics and languages of these two countries. The centres also aim to stimulate debate in the public domain to help promote participative policy making.

Meanwhile, the University is also setting up a Centre for Nanosciences and Nanotechnology. The centre has also been sanctioned by the UGC. ♦

## On gender equality

South and Central Asia under focus at a conference

A two-day conference on 'Gender Equity and Exclusion in South and Central Asia: Emerging Challenges' was organised by the Dr. K.R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, on October 17-18, 2011.

Speakers from across South and Central Asian countries — Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and India — deliberated on a wide range of issues related to exclusion of women and the emerging challenges both in the public and private domains and the need for good governance. The focus areas were South Asia and Central Asia, where women bear the brunt of the effects of poverty, illiteracy and violence.

There were seven major themes at the conference:

- Globalisation and Gendered Labour Market
- Gender, Media and Society: Participation, Portrayal and Policies
- Inclusion and Equality: Intersectionality of Gender, Religion and the State
- Gender and Education: A Social and Policy Perspective
- Gender Equality in Health
- Gender-based Violence and Ethnic and Armed Conflict
- Women in Politics and Governance

The conference was opened by Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dikshit and was chaired by Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung. The keynote address was delivered by the social scientist and pioneer of the women's movement in India Prof. Vina Mazumdar.

The Director of the Centre, Prof. Azra Razzack, and the Organising Secretary of the Conference, Dr. Sabiha Hussain, made opening remarks.



# Can culture be a panacea?

Can music, cinema and poetry rescue Pakistani society from the abyss? Research scholars from Jamia and other universities reflected on a range of issues at a recent conference

**A**t a time when Pakistan grapples with turmoil, can its youth restore balance? Research scholars from Jamia and other universities reflected on this issue at a recently held conference ‘Understanding Pakistan’, organised by the Pakistan Studies Programme, Academy of International Studies, Jamia. Scholars presented papers on all dimensions of present-day Pakistan — US-Pakistan and India-US relations, fundamentalism and Islamisation, edu-



**Journalist MJ Akbar at the event on Pakistan**

cation and media, environment, and culture.

Bidisha Mukherjee, pursuing an MPhil at the Institute of Foreign Policy Studies, Calcutta University, presented a case study on ‘Coke Studio: A Musical Identity’. Mukherjee posited that the creation of ‘Pakola’ (a soft drink, deriving its name from ‘Pakistan’ and ‘Cola’) and the rebranding of Pakistan International Airlines were not business propositions alone — it was an effort at creating a national identity. In the same vein, music groups like ‘Vital Signs’ (of the *Dil Dil Pakistan* fame) have attempted to text a similar message, that it’s great to be a Pakistani. Amid the current turbulence, it’s Coke Studio that’s fulfilling the big responsibility

of attempting a synthesis in society, by bringing on the same platform singers from diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds.

Dipanwita Roy Ghatak, from the same institute, in her paper on ‘Pakistan through the Kaleidoscope of Modernisation’ described the pulls and pressures contrarian worldviews were exerting on the societal fabric of Pakistan.

Azad Ahmad Khan from the Academy of International Studies, Jamia, in his paper ‘Language Controversy and Education in Pakistan’, discussed the genesis of the dominance of Urdu in Pakistan. The English-speaking elite, that goes to English medium schools, the Urdu-speaking class that dominates the polity, and the ethnic minorities like Balochs who are demanding education in their own language, are competing for the limited resources that the country devotes to education, he said. When the nation was carved out, Urdu was sought to be portrayed as a unifying force, but it has turned out to be a disintegrating force.

Zarine Khan from JNU, describing Pakistan’s quest for identity and its attempt to justify the two-nation theory, referred to historiography to demonstrate how historians in the country have interpreted events. In order to give it antiquity, history textbooks have linked the country to the Indus Valley Civilisation and have also emphasised its distinctiveness in comparison to the Indo-Gangetic Civilisation. Quotes attributed to Jinnah like “Pakistan came into existence the day the first Indian national embraced Islam” have further sought to give a sense of predestination to Pakistan.

Anil Kumar Mishra, pursuing a PhD at the Department of Mass Communication, MG International Hindi University, Wardha, presented a paper on ‘Contextualising Society and Media’. He described the deplorable conditions that media-persons work under and the threats they face, and wondered what makes them nonetheless fearless.

Earlier, M.J. Akbar, Editorial Director, *India Today*, in his keynote address, described Pakistan’s search for common enemies as the keystone of its foreign policy, as against India’s foreign policy based on its search for common friends. ♦

# ERP revolution

A workshop in Jamia showcases a variety of modules, especially designed for educational institutions

The FTK-Centre for Information Technology, Jamia Millia Islamia, organised a two-day workshop on 'ERP Mission' on September 17-18, 2011. Enterprise Resource Planning is a software that helps organisations automate their processes in an integrated manner. The ERP Mission is a Rs. 19-crore project sanctioned by the National Mission on Education through information and communication technology (ICT), Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India.

Apart from Jamia, there are seven more institutions participating in this project, with IIT Kanpur as the chief coordinating institution. The objective of the workshop was to deepen awareness among higher educational institutions about the Open Source ERP modules developed under the ERP Mission.

The workshop was attended by over 120 delegates from 20 institutions of

higher learning from various parts of the country.

The workshop was inaugurated by T.A. Khan, Deputy Director General, National Informatics Centre. Ravi Gupta, CEO, Elets Technomedia Pvt. Ltd., was the guest of honour. In his welcome address, Prof. Zahid H. Khan, Hony Director, FTK-Centre for Information Technology, emphasised the importance of collaboration among developers, administrators and end-users for successful implementation of ERP systems in educational institutions.

The event provided a useful platform for developers, university administrators and the teaching fraternity for sharing ideas on the development of ERP modules, designed especially for educational institutions. A number of ERP modules were presented at the event by the participating institutions, including a module on 'Purchase and Inventory Control' by the Jamia team led by Dr. S.K. Naqvi, Project PI. ♦

## Know your students better

Two new initiatives to help teachers understand student concerns

Starting this academic session, Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung is meeting students, including undergraduate and post-graduate students, and research scholars across all streams with the objective of providing students one-on-one access to the Vice-Chancellor.

Also, senior teachers of the University will visit the school hostels every day during lunch hour and the Univer-



sity boys and girls hostel a few days every week and spend time with them.

The objective behind this interaction is not only to make students feel comfortable and welcome in the University — most of them come from different parts of the country — but also to understand their concerns. The underlying idea is also to further strengthen the bond between students and teachers.

## Everyone's Ramayana

Scholars object to removal of A.K. Ramanujam's seminal essay from Delhi University history syllabus

The structure of the university system is sound enough to give teachers the freedom to prescribe a reading list to students.

So at one level, the controversy surrounding the removal of A.K. Ramanujam's essay 'Three Hundred Ramayanas: Five Examples and Three Thoughts on Translation' from the history syllabus of Delhi University was "contrived", said Mridula Mukherjee, Professor at the Centre for Historical Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.

She was speaking at a symposium on 'Many Ramayanas — Cultural Censorship and Intellectual Freedom' organised by the Jamia Teachers Solidarity Association at the Nelson Mandela Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution, Jamia, in early November.

At another level, Professor Mukherjee said the controversy was also all about politics.

"If you say that there are many versions of Ramayana, then it implies that it's a story, not history, that there is no historical figure called Rama and so there is no rationale for a Rama temple," Professor Mukherjee argued in her presentation.

Writer Nilanjana Roy, referring to a litany of book bans, wondered why was it that each time a book was banned, the general refrain was that the writer should have been more responsible.

Professor P.K. Basant, Department of History, Jamia, emphasised that the idea of one Ramayana goes against the grain of the Rama tradition.



# Preparedness for 'D' day

How prepared are we to mitigate disasters? Well, at Jamia, a beginning was made on Disaster Management Day

**J**amia Millia Islamia observed October 11, 2011 as 'Disaster Reduction Day'. As part of the programme, there were a variety of activities organised to sensitise the University community about the importance of disaster reduction, disaster preparedness, and disaster management.

A 'Disaster Awareness Rally' was flagged off from the Faculty of Engineering. Faculty members and students from different departments/centres participated in the rally, wearing caps and holding banners and placards, displaying messages about disaster preparedness and precautions.

The rally was followed by the screening of a documentary film on disaster risk reduction and a public meeting chaired by Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof. S.M. Rashid. Experts from the National Institute of Disaster Management (NISD) also attended the meeting.

Prof. Zahid Husain Khan, Dean, Students Welfare, stressed on the relevance of awareness programmes on disaster management among students

and appreciated the efforts of NISD in the area.

Dr. Vinod Kumar Sharma, Professor, Indian Institute of Public Administration, in his keynote address on Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), explained that DRR comprises concepts like disaster management, disaster mitigation and disaster preparedness. He called for a DRR protocol in the country, as it was prone to disasters and massive destruction of property and loss of lives. The responsibility for a DRR initiative should be taken up by the government, the private sector, universities and also by each and every individual. Professor Sharma urged the University to initiate more programmes, like providing training in first-aid for disaster management, in collaboration with organisations such as the Indian Red Cross.

Prof. Rashid, in his presidential remarks, urged the Office of Dean Students' Welfare to take the initiative for organising a National Disaster Management Camp for the benefit of students and members of the faculty. ♦

## Tale of two nations

A lecture on Indian Muslims in the 1940s

**T**he Dr. K.R. Narayanan Centre for Dalit and Minorities Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, organised a lecture on 'One Community, Two Nations: Indian Muslims in the 1940s' under its B.R. Ambedkar Memorial Lecture Series. The talk was delivered by Dr. Rizwan Qaiser, Department of History & Culture, Jamia, on August 25, 2011.

Dr. Qaiser, who has recently published *Resisting Colonialism and Communal Politics: Maulana Azad and the Making of the Indian Nation*, highlighted the aspects of conflict and churning within the Muslim community in the wake of the Partition.

## Urdu scholars work on Ghalib

A comprehensive dictionary on Ghalib being prepared at Jamia

**T**he Academy of Professional Development of Urdu Medium Teachers, Jamia Millia Islamia, organised a five-day workshop in the month of July on 'Farhang-e-Murakkabat-e-Ghalib', in collaboration with the Urdu Teaching & Research Centre, Lucknow; the Central Institute of Indian Languages, Mysore; and the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Several eminent Urdu scholars from different parts of the country, including Prof. Ghazanfar Ali, Director, Academy of Professional Develop-

ment of Urdu Medium Teachers, Jamia, participated in the workshop.

The scholars are working on a comprehensive dictionary on Ghalib. The objective of the workshop was to review the material prepared on 'Farhang-e-Murakkabat-e-Ghalib' so far and to give suggestions for further improvement. Ghalib's poetry is not only popular among the native speakers of Urdu but also among non-native speakers. The dictionary is expected to be a good source material for Ghalib aficionados. ♦

# TEDx Jamia

Sonal Manshing, Nandita Das give pep talk to students



Speakers at the TEDx event

Jamia Millia Islamia, in collaboration with TEDx organised 'TEDxJMI' on October 21. The theme of TEDxJMI was 'Switcheroo', which brought together people who have successfully managed a career shift.

Actress Nandita Das, danseuse Dr. Sonal Manshing, mediaperson Sagarika

Ghose, Roshan Abbas, and newsreader-turned-career counsellor Dr. Usha Albuquerque were among those who shared their experiences.

Das spoke about the need for "blending passion with profession". Citing examples from her own life, she said it was important to follow one's passion in whatever one did. On the other hand, Abbas urged students to appreciate the value of their roots and said that just as students could learn a lot from their elders, the older generation could also imbibe new ideas from the younger generation.

Ghose described how contemporary media had moved away from merely holding a mirror to society to bringing about social change, and referred to several instances of reportage where media activism had made an impact. ♦

## A new cap

Jamia VC in the Central Board of RBI



Vice-Chancellor Najeeb Jung has been nominated to the Central Board of the Reserve Bank of India. The Central Board is the apex body of the RBI, which is the central banking institution of India and controls the monetary policy of the country. As part of the Central Board, he will now be involved in giving directions to the bank.

Meanwhile, he has also been nominated to the senate of IIT Kanpur for a period of three years.

## Books that bind

Community development initiative becomes a huge draw



Fostering a culture of sharing with the less privileged, Jamia has been conducting 'Give and Take Books' initiative, which has now become immensely popular over the years. The objective of the programme is to build and sustain the "spirit of giving and sharing" in the community.

This year, the event was organised in mid-August. The books were collected on the University campus and redistributed to eager readers. ♦

## CREATIVITY FOR A CAUSE

(Left) A solo exhibition titled 'Lord of Majesty and Glory' by Dr. Seeme Murtaza, Associate Professor, Faculty of Fine Arts, Jamia, at Alliance Francaise, New Delhi, in early September.

(Right) 'Unheard Voices', featuring the photographs by Kausiki Sarma, at the MF Hussain Art Gallery, Jamia, in early August. The exhibition highlighted the travails of women caught in incessant violence in the North East.





# Heart of Darkness

Research scholars of the Centre for Theoretical Physics are seeking to understand neutrinos, dark matter, and other puzzling phenomenon of the Universe

Scientists across the world are seeking to understand the fundamental particles of earth called ‘neutrinos’, which are assumed to travel at the speed of light, have zero mass, and go undetected through different media, without being destroyed. Among the scientists, who are straining to fathom the available data, is Arnab Dasgupta, a PhD student at the Centre for Theoretical Physics (CTP), Jamia Millia Islamia. Recognising the fact that the findings in this area will have path-breaking implications for the world of sciences, he is making the fullest use of the collaborative research infrastructure that the Centre, founded in 2006, has built up. In his research work, he banks on data emerging from across the world, including two research labs in Japan, and one in Antarctica.

Amna Ali, doing her PhD on ‘Inflation, Dark Energy and its Possible Alternatives’, is attempting to understand both the period of early and late (current) cosmic acceleration. “Inflation is the early time cosmic acceleration. It is a beautiful paradigm that can solve the various inconsistencies in the Big Bang Theory. But it still calls for a viable theoretical model. The other important

challenge before cosmology is to understand the late time acceleration of universe, which is supported by supernova data.”

Big Bang, the early universe, topology of the universe; accelerating universe; gravitational collapse; black holes — these are some of the cosmic puzzles that doctoral students at CTP are trying to solve, in tandem with scientists across the world. As Prof. M Sami, Director, CTP, says, “The matters that shine in the universe constitutes only four percent. Most of the universe constitutes dark energy and dark matter. Can that dark energy explain why the universe is accelerating?”

Essentially, theoretical physics is about proving certain assumptions through mathematical models. As the work is in the realm of data analysis, telescopes and other equipment are replaced by computers. CTP has also acquired a *taramandal* (mobile planetarium) to strengthen its Public Outreach Programme.

The Centre was inaugurated by world famous scientist Prof. Jayant V. Narlikar in November 2006. Supported in terms of grants and infrastructure by institutions like the Indian Institute of Astrophysics, Bangalore, and the Interuniver-

sity Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), Pune, the Centre, though nascent, has swiftly found recognition in the scientific community. “The proof of recognition of a scientific research centre is in the kind of research papers it publishes. The CTP is committed to doing high-quality research and its members publish their results in the form of papers in highly acclaimed international journals”, says Prof. Sami.

The CTP continues to draw external support from several sources, including UGC, the Department of Science and Technology, the Japan Society for the Promotion of Sciences, and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research. It has long-term collaborations with American, European, Japanese, South African and Russian scientists, apart from Indian scientists in various institutes, such as the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Kolkata, and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.

A large number of scientists visit the Centre every year, participating in workshops, seminars, training courses, and a range of other scientific activities. Students of the Centre also attend international conferences. Gaveshna Gupta, carrying out research on the ‘Dark Side of the Universe and its Observational Signature’, attended the International Centre for Theoretical Physics in Italy, where she got the opportunity to interact with some of the

world’s foremost scientists in the area.

The research at CTP is divided into four major areas of theoretical physics: gravitation, astrophysics, cosmology, and high-energy physics. Research is carried out by students, members of the faculty, postdoctoral fellows and long-term and short-term visitors.

The Centre organises several scientific events as part of its Public Outreach Programme. The V.V. Narlikar Memorial Lecture is a major annual event of the Centre.

Facilitating this range of activities is a faculty with a rich and varied experience.

Prof. Sami did his PhD at the Moscow State University and is a Fellow, both at the Indian Academy of Science and the National Academy of Science. He was elected Fellow at the latter in 2009.

Sushant Ghoshtokumar Ghosh did his Post-Doctorate in Relativity & Astrophysics from the University of Zululand, South Africa, and his PhD in Numerical Analysis from Nagpur University, Maharashtra.

Sanjay Jhingan has been JSPS Invitation Fellowship Senior Researcher at the Department of Physics, Kyoto University, Japan; and Post-Doctoral Fellow at the Department of Physics, University of Basque Country, Spain; and the Department of Mathematics, Politecnico of Milan, Italy.

Dr. Anjan Ananda Sen got his doctorate from Jadavpur University, Kolkata, and has been associated with the Harish Chandra Research Institute, Department of Atomic Energy, Allahabad; Instituto Superior Technico, Lisbon, Portugal; and the Department of Physics and Astronomy, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, United States.

Dr. Rathin Adhikari got his PhD in Physics from Visvabharati University, Shantiniketan, and was earlier associated with the Jagadis Bose National Science Talent Search, Kolkata.

Dr. Tabish Qureshi did his PhD in Physical Sciences from the School of Physical Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University. He was Post-Doctoral Fellow at The Institute of Mathematical Sciences, Chennai, and was also Visiting Scientist at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research, Kalpakkam, before joining the Department of Physics in Jamia.

Here’s hoping that this galaxy of scientists will continue to shed more light on that darkness out there that has infinitely mystified and intrigued human intelligence. ♦

## The Dazzle

**A** defining moment for the Centre came when the Nobel Committee, while declaring the Nobel Prize for Physics for the year 2011, included CTP’s contribution in its list of most significant contributions to the field of dark energy. It is customary for the Nobel Committee to describe the other major contributors to a given field of study, along with the Nobel Laureates. The document titled ‘Scientific Document on the Nobel Prize in Physics 2011’ on ‘The Accelerating Universe’ was released by the ‘Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences’ on October 4, 2011. It cites the paper co-authored by Prof. Sami, Director, CTP. The paper written by him is titled ‘Dynamics of Dark Energy’, which was published in the *International Journal of Modern Physics (D15: 1753-1936, 2006)*.

This is the only contribution from India which has been included in the Nobel Prize Committee Document, 2011.



# Betting on poetry: The art of fine rhetoric

At Jamia, students and teachers are fostering a vibrant culture of *baitbazi* — an efflorescence of a unique art that can only deepen the appreciation for the aesthetics of Urdu and poetry

In the popular Indian pastime of *antakhari*, usually based on film music, the act of rendering a favourite or, equally, a rare number is one of fond excavation, but one extending to less than a century of popular music.

Sitting on the lawns of Jamia, when BEd student Anjum Jamaal, however, sets the ball rolling for a round of *baitbazi*, a game in Urdu poetry akin to *antakhari*, she summons not only the reserves of her memory and knowledge of Urdu poetry a few centuries old, she also brings into the game her understanding of a hoary poetic tradition and diction, skills of recitation, and an understanding of a range of issues, including international politics!

*'Ek mitti ka diya bujha kar chala gaya,  
toofan apni zaat dikha kar chala gaya.'*

Anjum has made a political comment — on the manner in which a superpower has trampled upon weaker nations.

In response, Kaifia Choudhary, a IIIrd-Year BA student, picks up the last letter of the couplet and says thus:

*'Ab unko kahaan dhoondein,  
insaan jinhe kehte hain  
Kuchh bat gae qaumon mein,  
kuchh bat gae zaaton mein.'*

This poetic 'crossfire' is a popular 'game' among Jamia students. In fact, the University has had a rich tradition of *baitbazi*. Even students from engineering and physiotherapy backgrounds join in. Some, of course, take it very seriously. Naushad Manzar, an Urdu MPhil student, hailing from Samastipur in Bihar, has taken this passion to a competitive level, having represented Jamia in a few *baitbazi* competitions in the capital.

Initiated into Urdu poetry from an early age, Naushad grew up attending *mushairas* and reading Urdu books and magazines. The atmosphere in Jamia deepened that interest. So much so that when he joined BEd after graduate studies, he was made team leader. In the *baitbazi* competition organised by the University of Delhi in 2009, the Jamia team won the first prize. He has already shot for 50 episodes of *baitbazi* for *Aliya*, a production house run by Suhaib Ilyasi, and for 25 episodes for *Zee Salaam*. Jamia's MCRC has also recorded a few sessions of *baitbazi* with Naushad and other members of the *baitbazi* team.

Salman Faisal, pursuing an MPhil in Urdu, and Qurratul Ain, doing an MA in Urdu, also represent Jamia in the *baitbazi* events. Like Naushad, both of them got hooked to *baitbazi* early on, due in part to their early exposure to Urdu.

**Pride in poetry: (from left):  
Salman Faisal, Qurratul Ain and  
Naushad Manzar**





## Baitbazi basics

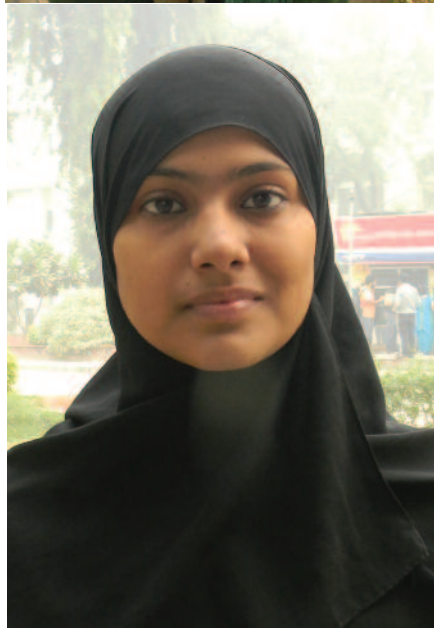
The basic premise of this 'game' is the same as that of *antakshari* — competing teams try to outdo each other by reciting appropriate couplets. The game begins with a neutral person or organiser either giving a *huruf* (letter of the alphabet) to start the game with, or a word, or a theme. So it could either be the Urdu letter 'meem' ('M'), or a word, as in 'mohabbat'. In the first case, a range of themes can be evoked, but in the second, participants must ensure that the word 'mohabbat' does appear in the couplet. Often, a theme is also set down. Ideally, in such cases, contestants ought to focus on the theme, but Naushad admits it seldom happens.

Salman explains that what adds to the charm of the game is one's ability to hold the attention of the audience and impress the judges, at once. Often, however, they make two opposing demands. "For if the audience is not familiar with Urdu poetry, there's no point in reciting Ghalib and Iqbal. Then we have to come up with couplets that are easier to understand in order to earn audience applause. But in this case, there is the risk of losing out with the judges." Qurratul, however, says that the judges also assess aspects other than the quality of the repository of couplets alone. They take into consideration one's overall skills of oratory, voice modulation, diction etc.

How does one gain mastery in the art? To begin with, it's a function of cultural initiation and extensive exposure to Urdu poetry through reading and listening. Farkhunda Begum, a BA IIIrd-year student, had added advantage because her school used to organise *baitbazi* competitions as part of house activities. The teachers would help students prepare, suggesting a reading list specifically meant for those interested in *baitbazi*.

Kaifia's initiation also began in school where she participated in events with the help of her teachers. Anjum, however, admits that she had no interest in *baitbazi* in school. It was only during her BA years at Rohilkhand University that she developed an interest. "The professor used to insist that we learn Urdu poetry and recite it in class. In fact, he started the practice of *baitbazi* competition during classes," she says.

Similar emphasis is given by the Urdu Department at Jamia. Qurratul says, "It might look like a school-level approach, but our faculty makes us read in class, and points out where we are going wrong, and how to improve on it."



**The word warriors:**  
(clockwise from top) Farkhunda Begum, Kaifia Choudhary and Anjum Jamal

## Fun, real and imagined

Students, however, also recognise that *baitbazi* is hardly a national 'sport'. In fact, even participation is limited to Delhi, due in part to logistical and financial constraints. But students feel that *baitbazi* is a reward in itself. Farkhunda says that responding to your opponents on stage through an Urdu couplet transports one back to the days of the nawabs. Anjum, learning how to teach students as part of her BEd programme, has chosen *baitbazi* as a house activity. Naushad says *baitbazi* will always stay with him because of his interest in research in Urdu. So much so that while commuting through the city in a bus, he imagines creating two teams, assigning a topic, and starting a mind game of *baitbazi* between the two imaginary teams... and all on his own. ♦



# Three journeys...

...Three continents, but the same result — enormous enrichment

Rarely does a student proudly announce that she is repeating a college year. If Shanchui Marchang, BA IInd Year English Hons does, she has a reason. She was among the six students from India who got a chance to participate in the Near East-South Asian cultural exchange programme with Chadron State College at Nebraska in the US for six months — August 2010-May 2011, following a rigorous selection process.

Missing a year in school or college is viewed with concern in India, but she — and her family — was fine with it. The rewards were great, after all. Given the subject options, she chose Communication (with Journalism and Graphic Design) over English Literature, because that is also her career goal.

Shanchui has already got a taste of not just American education but work practices abroad as

well. The biggest difference, she realised, was that education was not about passing examinations. “Each day was important. I couldn’t miss a single class. And there was no scope for procrastination. The presentations I had to make on a regular basis were like real work.” Much work was done online, which has per force made Shanchui tech-savvy.

An eye-opener has been the self-reliance that students seek while in their teens. “The peers would ask me where had I worked before and would be surprised to know that in India, students of this age depend on parents. There, they are supposed to earn for their upkeep in college.”

Political Science student Khalid Jaleel’s trip was to a different continent, and for a different purpose. He was the only student representative from India at the India-Brazil-South Africa (IBSA) Academic Forum at the Durban University of Technology in Durban, South Africa.

The Forum provides the academicians of these three countries an opportunity to foster an atmosphere of cooperation and facilitates wider research cooperation between institutions, research groups and individuals. The outcome of this academic forum is then later presented — through a formal statement — at the IBSA Summit of the Heads of State/Government.

As a student representative, Khalid not only got the chance to participate in the framing of a document on the list of student demands (which came to include a demand for higher funding for student exchange programmes), he also got to witness the functioning and deliberations of a trilateral organisation and heard the concerns of representatives of various think tanks, student union leaders, researchers and students of all these three countries.

Khalid admits it was a surprise to know that people in South Africa take this forum seriously, unlike in India. This political science student has been quick to understand that unlike BRIC nations, the forum, which is about South-South collaboration, has the potential to present a united front before the United Nations.

However, it was not all work. Khalid absorbed

**World views:**  
(clockwise from top) Shanchui, Aashish and Khalid



elements of a variety of cultures. This journey of learning found its logical culmination in the Phoenix Settlement, founded by Mahatma Gandhi.

Aashish Birgi, a IInd-Year BBS student, was part of the Indian delegation at the International Youth Forum, held in Russia, from July 1-10.

The International Youth Forum, Seliger 2011, is an initiative of the Russian Youth Ministry which invites 350 young and like-minded individuals from 95 countries to meet, share ideas, exchange views, sharpen their skills, and enter into a dialogue to seek insights into changing global trends. This year the Russian President and the Prime Minister visited the forum.

From India, 40 delegates were selected from institutions like the IITs, BITS Pilani, JNU and the

National Law Universities, following a rigorous online selection process.

The camp setting at Seliger Lake, 50 km from Moscow, provided the backdrop for the programme. There were four categories the students were divided into: Mass Media, World Politics, Civil Society and Business & Innovation.

Aashish joined the Civil Society group owing to his interest and experience in the field. The interaction with students from across the world not only helped him widen his horizons but also won Aashish quite a few friends. But the moment Aashish will cherish most was the cultural night, when the Indian delegation's performance got the young delegates from the countries really interested in India and its cultural heritage. ♦

## Small wonders

They could barely reach the microphone but Jamia Middle School students enthralled the audience with their oratory on Founder's Day

**A**t 13, you are either too shy to face an audience of 200 or you don't know the art of understatement and take the speech prepared by your teachers to theatrical levels. But it was a rare opportunity to see a group of students in their teens/preteens 'con-

impeccable Urdu and flawless diction.

The students were Nooma Kulsoom, Tayyeb Aziz, Sayeed Ahmed Khan, Aalia Khan and Simeen Anjum of standard VIII and Mohd Osama of standard VI.

Never was there even the slightest quiver in their voices, nor an attempt to



**No baby steps:  
(From left): Aalia Khan, Simeen Anjum, Tayyeb Ajiz, Nooma Kulsoom, Sayeed Ahmed Khan and Mohd Osama**

duct' the proceedings of a Central University, with a minister and the Vice-Chancellor on stage and senior university staff in the audience — making announcements, reciting couplets, reading out an annual report — all in

impress the audience by overdoing it all. The body language was one of poise, comfort and understatement — as if this was a matter of routine for them.

A great lesson indeed in public speaking from a bunch of preteens! ♦



# Payback time

A Jamia alumnus donates precious correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi, Pt Nehru and the Jamia fraternity that he had preserved for decades in Germany. What sentiments moved him to gift this great historical heritage to Jamia?

## Mustahsan Hamid Khan

**E**ven today, after more than six decades, our National Anthem *Jana Gana Mana* echoes in my ears, in this faraway place in Germany — Hattingen. Each time I hear these words, my eyes well up with tears and I am reminded of the day when I first sang our National Anthem. It was January 26, 1948. India was a free country after being under British colonial rule for approximately 150 years. I was in the fifth grade at Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) and joined my classmates in singing our new National Anthem to celebrate India's first Republic Day. We were clearly too young to appreciate the sanctity of the moment and focused more on trying to get more than one plate of free *jalebis* that each of us was given as part of the celebration.

India's Independence was a bitter-sweet experience for many; while India got its Independence; the country was split into two parts — Pakistan and Hindustan. I'd rather not go into the details of the causes of India's Partition. Suffice it to say that what happened was not right — a natural outcome of the British colonial practice of 'divide and rule'. The communal riots that followed Partition resulted in tremendous loss of human life and indescribable destruction. During the period immediately following Partition, I was with my father, Mr Hamid Ali Khan, in Karol Bagh, where Maktaba Jamia was located at the time. My mother, along with my brothers and sisters, was in Kaimganj with my maternal grandparents. As the law and order situation deteriorated, we were forced to leave Karol Bagh and move in with Devdas Gandhi, Gandhiji's youngest son and editor of the *Hindustan Times*, who had sent his car to pick us up. Shortly thereafter, Devdasji informed us that both our house and Maktaba Jamia had been set

ablaze by rioters; needless to say there was no going back. We stayed with Devdasji for 10 days and then moved to Purana Qila (Old Fort), where we took refuge in a refugee camp. After a stay of about three weeks at the camp, we set off on a journey that took us through Karachi, Bombay (Mumbai), Bhopal and Karimganj, finally landing us in Jamia Nagar, Delhi. It took a few months for us to settle down in Jamia Nagar, where Maktaba Jamia was re-established from scratch.

At that point in time, Jamia was under the able guidance of Dr. Zakir Husain, Prof. M. Mujeeb, Mr. Ansari, Dr. Aqeel Ahmad, Dr. Abid Hussain and Akhtar Farooqi Sahib, and my father, in his role as Managing Director of Maktaba Jamia, had the privilege of working very closely with them. Having witnessed that period, it is clear to me that the Jamia of today owes its stature to the dedication and sacrifice of those men.

I completed my high school education at Jamia and consider myself fortunate to have been part of the institution. The values that I imbibed at Jamia have been a guiding force in my life. I have fond memories of the time I spent at Jamia. A few silly and childish activities that got me into trouble at the time still stand out in my mind. I remember the art class and the "help" of my friend and classmate (Professor) Raza Hussain Zaidi in finishing the work needed to pass.

**I** have recently donated to Jamia a number of items that I consider to be part of our national heritage. Among these are a number of letters written by people of historic significance and a collection of calligraphy put together by my father.

Of particular significance in the collection is a letter written by Gandhiji to my father in 1932. In the letter, Gandhiji thanks my father for sending him a number of books in Urdu, requests addi-



**Back to where it belonged: One of the priceless pieces of calligraphy gifted to Jamia by the author**

tional books and expresses sorrow about a fire that had burned down the press. Gandhiji wrote the letter in Urdu and mailed it to my father in an envelope he had himself made!

The collection also contains eight letters from Dr. Zakir Husain to my father. The letters are written in Urdu and the content of the letters is personal in nature, reflecting their friendship.

Completing the collection is another valuable asset — a set of 22 letters consisting of correspondence between Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Vijaylaxmi Pandit, Padmaja Naidu and my father. The letters reflect Panditji's desire to have his now famous book *Glimpses of World History* published at Maktaba Jamia.

The collection of calligraphy that I have gifted to Jamia consists of 30 pieces of calligraphy. It was assembled by my father, who had an abiding interest in anything related to printing and publishing. Of particular value in the collection are three pages written by Emperor Shah Jahan's teacher, Abdul Rasheed Dehlwi. These pages were used as examples by Shah Jahan in practising his calligraphy. The collection also contains a personal favourite of mine that has served as a guiding force throughout my life:

*Perceive the worthless world vanishing and impermanent.*

*Consider every inhaling and exhaling breath*

*a passing phase.*

*But when you take up some great endeavour  
Believe that every breath is a never-ending life.*

I still have vivid memories of my father presenting me with a framed copy of these verses at the railway station in Paris when I travelled to Aachen for the first time; it still hangs on the wall of my office, in front of my desk.

The items I have gifted to Jamia have been in my possession for many years. They are of great sentimental value to me as they belonged to my father. Needless to say, the decision to part with them did not come easy. There were several occasions when I had considered selling the documents in Europe for what would, very likely, have been a handsome price. Each time, though, something within held me back and I found I could not bring myself to selling what I believed was a part of my heritage. I have finally decided to surrender to the dictates of the voice within and it is for this reason that I have returned to India, through my gift to Jamia, what is rightfully hers. However, I retain possession of seven letters written to me by Dr. Zakir Hussain while I was an engineering student in Aachen, Germany, and I hold on to these for purely sentimental reasons.

I thank God for guiding my decision.

*Vande Mataram* ♦



# Tuned in to society

From MCRC, Smita Vats learnt altogether new possibilities in communicating with the masses

When Smita Vats joined the AJK Mass Communication Research Centre (MCRC) at Jamia Millia Islamia in 1987, she already had a body of work in theatre and radio. At All India Radio (AIR), she regularly did programmes for *Global Overseas Service* and *Yuvavani*, doing interviews and voiceovers. Graduating in psychology from Jesus and Mary College, New Delhi, Smita weighed her options — of honing either her theatre or mass media skills. Having acquired real-life training with stalwarts like Feisal Alkazi, Ammal Allana and Joy Michael, who were some of India’s finest practitioners of theatre, she, however, decided to break mould and chose MCRC over the National School of Drama.

The most powerful impression about MCRC of the early years — she represents one of the earliest batches — was that the Centre was not at all an “affluent” set up. Nobody owned a car and only two or three students had a scooter. Students from all backgrounds came and worked together, including those who had done three MAs! There was thus rich diversity in age too.

Besides the regular faculty, which included Rajeev Lochan, now National Gallery of Modern Art Director, teaching graphics; and Vijaylaxmi Bose, teaching media theory, guest lectures from the likes of M.S. Sathyu were common. Television journalism was yet to arrive and the focus was on socially relevant projects. “People joined the course with a view to making a difference, and did work that they thought would make an impact on society. I worked on themes like anti-smoking, the nuclear holocaust, and issues relating to sex and sexuality.”

However, they were not tuned in to the larger University campus. “We were in an island of our own, consumed with ourselves,” admits Smita. Perhaps, few felt the need for an ‘external’ peer group, what with its own heightened social sensitivity, providing enough intellectual stimulus and engagement.

“It was a life-changing experience. A lot came out of the discussions I had then with my peers. It shaped our personality, gave us a vision, though we didn’t realise it at that age,” Smita says. “MCRC opened my eyes to a lot of possibilities,” says Smita. Films were not on her agenda. Uppermost on her mind was the need to align mass communication with change. Coupled with that was her background in theatre, her knack for story telling, and her interest in working for children. All these led to the establishment of ‘Itihaas’, an NGO that strives to inculcate a love for heritage and traditions among children, not, however, through mere visits to monuments. To Smita, a more important connect is the real-life stories that elders have to narrate, the culinary traditions we take for granted, and the rituals that communities and people follow.

Smita embodies an interesting convergence of mass communication and community. ♦





# Jamia Professor gets co-opted

Prof. Akhtarul Wasey, Head, Department of Islamic Studies, and Honorary Director, Zakir Husain Institute of Islamic Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, has been nominated to a number of high-level committees of the Government of India.

He has been named as one of the Expert Members to the recently re-constituted Assessment and Minority Authority, which operates under the aegis of the Planning Commission. The purpose of the Assessment and Minority Authority is to evaluate the extent of development benefits which accrue to different socio-religious communities through various development programmes.

Prof. Wasey was also co-opted by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, Government of India, as a Non-official Member to the Working Group on Empowerment of the Minorities under the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17). He was assigned to the sub-group of 'Educational Empowerment'.

In addition, Prof. Wasey was also co-opted as a Member of a Steering Committee set up by the Planning Commission of India



for Elementary Education and Literacy under the Twelfth Year Plan.

Another feather in his cap was his lecture on 'Islam in Indian Tradition: Social Unity and Cultural Integration' in the Legislative Council of Bihar on July 23, 2011. He delivered this lecture under the Bihar Legislative Council Centenary Lecture Series.

Prof. Wasey's lecture was the second in a series of popular lectures that have been planned to mark the centenary celebrations of the Council.

The first lecture in the series was delivered by the former President of India Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam in May 2011. ♦

## About archives

An article titled 'Protection of Archival Documents from Photochemical Effects and Cultural Identities and Regional Cooperation in South Asia', authored by Dr. Syed Mohd. Amir, Conservationist at Jamia's Premchand Archives and Literary Centre, was published in *Ganjine ye Asnad, A Journal of Historical Research & Archival Studies*, Alzahra University, Tehran. The same was also published in the *International Journal of South Asian Studies*, Department of Political Studies, Pondicherry.

## Learning law at the Hague



Dr. Sanghamitra Choudhury, Guest Lecturer at the Department of Political science in Jamia, was selected as

Charles Wallace India Fellow for this year and taught at Queen's University, Belfast, UK. She also carried out research on 'Women's Role towards Conflict Transformation and Peace Building in the Context of Northern Ireland in the UK'. She was at the Queen's University from April- June, 2011. She also represented India as a United Nations International Law Fellow at the International Court of Justice at the Hague, Netherlands, in August 2011. At the Hague, she learned several facets of international law, including human rights, from a number of international scholars.

# Jamia Prof at Cambridge

Dr. Mohd. Irfan Qureshi from the Department of Biotechnology presented a paper titled 'Understanding the Role of Fe and S in the Maintenance of Thylakoid MPCs under Cd Stress Using BN-SDS-PAGE and ESI-MS/MS' at the 6th International Conference on Biogenesis of Iron Sulphur Proteins and Regulatory Functions, organised at the Girton College, Cambridge Univer-

sity, from August 22 to 25, 2011. Jamia's Proteomics & Bioinformatics Lab is the first to discover and elaborate on the role of iron and sulphur in the maintenance of thylakoidal multiprotein complexes, using proteomics, which are essential for photosynthesis. The lab is among the few international research groups specialising in pigment-protein complexes in thylakoids. ♦

# Mirza Ghalib's Statue



The statue of Ghalib was installed on the lawns of the main campus in 1969 in the Ghalib Centenary Year. Then Vice-Chancellor M. Mujeeb took personal interest in the project and warded off criticism from some who called it 'anti-Islamic'. The sculptor was M. N. Tyagi from the Faculty of Fine Arts. Tyagi asked a Jamia employee, Agha Khan, to pose as Ghalib, on account of a certain resemblance he bore to the great poet, and Khan, who used to do small jobs, readily obliged for days on end. Helping Tyagi was another colleague, Kishori Lal, and a BEd Arts student, Sitwad Kidwai. Prof. Mujeeb, himself a sculptor of fine calibre, dropped by regularly and found great satisfaction in contributing to the arduous work. Today, the statue stands tall, and lends a distinct character to the campus.



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