

Media Coordinator's Office
Jamia Millia Islamia

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Press Release

Jamia Millia Islamia organises week-long programme on 'Religious Minorities in Western Asia: A Historical Perspective'

Prof Talat Ahmad, Vice Chancellor, JMI emphasizing the importance of peaceful co-existence of religions said that an understanding of different religions was imperative to global peace.

Speaking at the inaugural session of MHRD-Global Initiative of Academic Network (GIAN) Course on 'Religious Minorities in Western Asia: A Historical Perspective' from January 30, 2017 to February 4, 2017, he said that no religion in the world spreads hatred.

"People are born into a religion by virtue of the religion of their parents and usually don't choose one. There isn't much difference between people as all human beings are created by the Almighty. Organically all people are same."

"At a time when the world seems to be divided along narrow religious and other identities, a course that promotes interreligious dialogue is much needed." Prof Ahmad said citing America's decision to ban immigrants from 7 Muslim dominated countries.

Prof. Dr. Herman G.B. Teule, Professor and Co-Founder of 'The Leuven Centre for the Study of Eastern and Oriental Christianity' Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium, is the visiting faculty of the GIAN course which is being coordinated by Dr Annie Kunnath, from the Centre for Comparative Religions and Civilizations (CCRC), Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI).

"Facing the situation of the disappearance of non-Islamic minorities from the Middle East, there is possible danger of a monolithic religious situation in the Arab World, which contradicts the historical developments of a great interaction, for the better or for the worse, between members of different religions." Prof Teule said. He added that a monolithic Middle East might lead to the idea of a monolithic West, which is already in the minds of some Western politicians, where members of non Christian religions may no longer be welcome.

It is worth noting that the inauguration of the programme coincided with the 'World Day of Peace' and on the 69th Martyrdom day of Mahatma Gandhi.

The main objectives of the course are to-- understand and discern the complexities of the religious situation in Western Asia in the pre-Islamic period and to comprehend the Islamic

attitude towards religious minorities both from juridical and intellectual perspectives as well as the responses given by the non-Islamic communities, especially the Nestorians and Jacobites.

Also, the course will endeavor to recognize – and to reflect on – the present-day situation of minorities in Western Asia with the help of the models of coexistence-dialogue-estrangement taught in the historical survey.

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