

Serendib

Serving the Community since 1972
The oldest Sri Lankan Association in the UK

Issue 130 Ramadan 1441AH April 2020

This issue:
Ramadan Appeal
Building Report
Charity Report
Communications Report
COVID-19 #Ramadan@home

'O you who believe, decreed upon you is fasting as it was decreed upon those before you, that you may become righteous'
(2:183)

Executive Committee

President

Ahamed Hussain Wahab
07970 103160
president@slia.org.uk

Vice President

Rafat Hashim
07984 604420
vice.president@slia.org.uk

Secretary

Manjula Ossman
07956 262600
secretary@slia.org.uk

Asst. Secretary

Tariq Salih
07734 467746
asst.secretary@slia.org.uk

Treasurer

Imtiaz Muhseen
07944 623740
treasurer@slia.org.uk

Asst. Treasurer

Ikraam Fareed
07530 422794
asst.treasurer@slia.org.uk

Committee Members

Imran Harris
07984 160026
committee@slia.org.uk

Khalid Malhar
07752 729009
committee@slia.org.uk

Ghanzanfar Hameed
07786 008607
committee@slia.org.uk

Abdul Hilmy
07887 823126
committee@slia.org.uk

Mohamed Saleem
07525 364491
committee@slia.org.uk

Assalamu Alaikum Wa Rahmatullahi Wa Barakatuhu

My Dear Respected Elders Brothers and Sisters
All Praise to Almighty (SWT) the Beneficent and Most Merciful

I would like to wish our members a blessed Ramadan. As we go through unprecedented times with COVID-19 impacting all forms of our livelihood here, back home and all over the world. The SLIA has also had to adapt like all other organisations to accommodate to the tests given and I wish to thank my entire ExCo for coping at this time.

For the first time in our history we have had to postpone our AGM and we will inform our membership as soon as the government believes it to be safe.

I am grateful that we have managed to secure a new tenant to our property before these COVID related issue had arisen. In addition, other great work has also been carried out by our Charity, Communications and Finance teams to ensure your SLIA is continuing to progress despite difficult circumstances.

Finally, I would like to remind our membership to please stay safe during these challenging times. For anyone feeling vulnerable, needing support or even just someone to talk to, we are here and are ready to help where we can. Please feel free to either email cv19@slia.org.uk or call 07495 333515 in confidence.

Was Salaams
Ahamed Hussain Wahab
President of SLIA

SLIA Vision

To connect our
members with their
Sri Lankan heritage





FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO GET ESSENTIAL FOODS, MEDICATION OR FEELING ISOLATED



Assalamu Alaikum wa Rahmatullahi wa Barakatuhu

As the threat of the coronavirus grows, people in our community may be finding it more difficult to get essential foods, medication and may feel isolated.

The SLIA Exco would like to offer support to anyone who needs help during these difficult times. This could include a simple phone call or delivering groceries/medication. We all acknowledge the severity of the

situation and it's important we remain strong and supportive as a community.

We encourage you to contact a member of our team to discuss support. We have identified brothers and sisters in our Exco and Charity sub-committee to act as points of contact. The contact details for the team can be found below.

مركز: SRI LANKA Islamic (UK) Association COVID-19 Help Line

 c19@slia.org.uk

 +44 7495 333515

PLEASE ENSURE YOU INCLUDE:

- ✓ Your NAME
- ✓ Your TELEPHONE NUMBER and/or EMAIL ADDRESS
- ✓ Type of Assistance Required
(i.e. Groceries | Medication collection | Request a phone call)

MAY ALLAH BLESS AND KEEP US ALL SAFE AND HEALTHY.

مركز: SRI LANKA
Islamic (UK) Association

SLIA Exco and Charity Sub-Committee

Secretary's Report

Dear Members, Assalamu Alaikum

I pray that you are all keeping well and staying safe, by the grace of Almighty Allah. We very much regret that the AGM could not be held on 5th April 2020 as planned due to the social distancing rules introduced by the government in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We have sought guidance from the Charity Commission and the Independent Examiner on the implications of postponing our AGM and have received a written response from the Charity Commission, with some suggestions of possible future steps.

One suggestion from the Charity Commission was that we should look into the feasibility of holding a "virtual AGM" using an application such as Zoom, in order to at least approve the new ExCo and pass any key resolutions or proposals, given that we currently have no further information on when the restrictions will be lifted. Following on from our discussions at the 2019 AGM, we received a proposed resolution by the 2nd January 2020 deadline to move the AGM date by up to 2 months from March or April, so that the AGM does not fall during the month of Ramadan and also gives the Independent Examiner sufficient time to finalise and sign-off the SLIA's year-end accounts.

We would be grateful for feedback from our members on their willingness to participate in a "virtual AGM". I will circulate the notice and AGM pack once we have a new date for the AGM.

The following nominations have been received ahead of the 2nd January 2020 deadline, and the nominees will be presented to the AGM for confirmation:

Position	Nominee	Proposed by	Seconded by
President	Rafat Hashim	Ishack Thahir	Mohamed Saleem
Vice-President	Ghanzanfar Hameed	Imran Harris	I Ahamadeen
Treasurer	Imtiaz Muhseen	Sarfan Saheed	I Ahamadeen
Assistant Treasurer	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT
Secretary	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT
Assistant Secretary	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT
Committee member	Mohamed Saleem	Ahamed Wahab	Hazari Hafeel
Committee member	Ahamed Wahab	Farook Zavahir	Khalid Malhar
Committee member	Khalid Malhar	Farook Zavahir	Ahamed Wahab
Committee member	Mohamed Rifaz Razik	A Salahudeen	Althaf Zahir
Committee member	VACANT	VACANT	VACANT

As announced last month, the ExCo have cancelled all other events that require physical participation for the foreseeable future, including Iftars and the Eid-ul-Fitr celebration scheduled for June 2020. However, the Comms Team are looking into the feasibility of a "virtual Zikr" during Ramadan, that would allow our members to see and connect with each other online.

Unfortunately, we cannot post out printed copies of this Newsletter to members as local printers are closed. On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank our members for their continued patience in the coming months during these testing times. May Allah grant us all a peaceful and blessed Ramadan.

Wa alaikum Salaam

Manjula Ossman, Secretary

Building Sub-Committee Report

Sub-Committee

Chair:

Rafat Hashim

Members:

Ikraam Fareed
Abdul Hilmy
Haleem Ossman
Shamique Ismail



SLIA Building
Rear aspect

Current Status

As reported in the December 2019 Newsletter, at conclusion and handover of the premises in September 2019, the Tenant paid all outstanding rents (8 months) and a further 3 months to cover part of the renegotiation period. The tenant also paid approximately 50% of legal & documentation costs. This brought to a close a tenancy that started in August 2013.

Alhamdulillah, a local business called Floral Creations has taken the premises from February 2020, paying rent on a monthly basis until the lease details are finalised, approved and signed; committing to a lease that would be just under 7 years on the same Quarterly rent as before. The lease includes 2 yearly break clauses, so that the SLIA keeps open the option to terminate early if the Rear Extension Project goes ahead. All due diligence checks were done and are positive, and InshaAllah pray that this Tenant, their business and Tenancy proceeds smoothly, to provide the SLIA a steady Income stream.

Was Salaam,

Rafat Hashim, Chair Building Sub-Committee

Upcoming SLIA / Virtual Events

Ramadan Virtual Zikrs:	Eid-ul-Fitr Lunch 2020
(To be Confirmed)	Cancelled
	Eid-ul-Adha Celebrations
Due to these unprecedented times we	2020
are exploring new ways to connect our	Details TBA
members from home. Please ensure we	
have your email so we can connect with you.	
Please email info@slia.org.uk	Meelad-un-Nabi
	November, Details TBA

Donations for SLIA events are most welcome. Please contact our President, Secretary or Treasurer to discuss, pledge or notify in advance.

SLIA Mission

SLIA's mission is to promote charitable, social, cultural, sports and educational activities to achieve unity and strengthen relationships in line with our religious and cultural values for the benefit of our members and the communities we engage with

Communication Sub-Committee Report

Sub-Committee

Chair:

Mohamed Saleem

Deputy Chair:

Ghanzanfar
Hameed

Members:

Ikraam Fareed
Khalid Malhar
Tariq Salih
Imran Harris

M:

+447495333515

Email:

info@slia.org.uk

Web:

www.slia.org.uk

Facebook: [sliauk](https://www.facebook.com/sliauk)

Twitter: [ukslia](https://twitter.com/ukslia)

Instagram: [ukslia](https://www.instagram.com/ukslia)

SLIA Communications

The SLIA Comms team aims to promote our community news, increase the profile of our SLIA and inform the community of the extra work our ExCo are doing for the SLIA . We are focussing on 3 main areas to improve the fundamentals of our communications strategy.

1. Improving our GDPR compliance

During the course of the year all-important SLIA related governance files have been transferred from various personal computers to a central store via the Cloud making it secure and accessible by all the ExCo team for future generations. To complement this, the ExCo team are now using 'slia.org.uk' email addresses for correspondence which will ensure SLIA material can be stored securely and accessible for future reference if needed.

2. Membership accuracy

The team have been busy carrying out the onerous task of consolidating our membership list which was an initiative started in previous years. This has been challenging due to the disparate sources and lack of information, however we are pleased to announce over 50% of this list has now been tested for accuracy and a structure in place to complete the process. Initiatives are also underway to sustain this accuracy by enabling members to update their own details in the future and encouraging more 2 way interaction between members and the ExCo team.

3. Communication to our members – Move to WhatsApp

One of the more popular ways of communicating with our members has been via our text message service. Whilst this has proved effective, we are in the process of enhancing this service and save further costs to the SLIA through moving this service to WhatsApp. This will have a number of advantages including speed of notifications to our members which can be particularly beneficial in cases of janaza notices and also enable us to send poster notifications of our future events. Of course, for members who do not have WhatsApp they can still receive notification via our traditional text service. Watch this space.

The Comms team have also agreed a new proposal for the design of our new website (slia.org.uk). This will bring extra benefits in providing an online presence in addition to our Facebook page. Also, opening up channels where our members can interact, pay subscriptions, donate and update their details with minimum disruption.

If you have any comments or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact us using one of the following channels listed on the left.

Mohamed Saleem, Chair Communications Sub-Committee

Charity Sub-Committee Report

All praise to the Almighty Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

Ramadan Appeal

The annual Ramadan food distribution to the poor and needy in Hambantota will go ahead this year insha'Allah. The Charity sub-committee is planning on using the funds that were not utilised for Ramadan distribution in Hambantota last year. Last year's Hambantota distribution was cancelled due to security forces preventing mass gathering of Muslims following the Easter Sunday terrorist attacks.

Easter Sunday Bomb Victims:

The Charity sub-committee has been communicating with 2 UK registered charity, BUDS and AEDU to carry out the required Charity Commission due diligence before donating funds to help with the ongoing long-term needs of the Easter Sunday bomb victims in Batticaloa. AEDU put us in touch with the Zion Church, which was the church that was targeted in Batticaloa. Sadly, although the pastor of the Zion Church immediately forgave the bomber, the church was still too hurt to talk to us about accepting donations in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. 82 families in the Zion Church community had had at least one family member killed or severely injured in the blast. Alhambulillah, one year on, we have spoken to the Pastor's wife, Michelle Mahesan, and have received a list of names of 21 potential beneficiaries, with some details of their circumstances and future needs.

Education Project:

The sub-committee is continuing to look into alternative education initiatives for the £23,500 set aside for this project.

Muslim Aid/Syria Project:

The balance funds of £4,993 from the Muslim Aid Walk for Syria were due to be donated to a Muslim Aid Maternal and Baby Health Clinic, helping Syrian refugees residing in refugee camps in Lebanon. However, we were alerted to a dispute regarding Muslim Aid governance and financial transparency and were therefore unable to donate the funds to Muslim Aid as planned. We are carrying out the required due diligence to find an alternative charity operating in Syria to which we can donate the funds. Unfortunately, on further investigation, many of the charities operating in Syria that have been suggested by members seem to be involved in Charity Commission queries or investigations into their affairs or do not respond to requests for due diligence information, and therefore do not pass SLIA's due diligence requirements laid out by SLIA's Independent Examiner.

ASICS 10km Run for Charity:

After the success of the 10K run / walk last year, the SLIA were looking to participate again this year but the Covid-19 lock down meant that sadly, the event had to be cancelled. Please contact our Committee if you are interested in participating in the next sponsored 10km run through central London.

After taking the Charity Sub-Committee forward, Manjula Ossman has stepped down as chair of the Sub-Committee but will continue to support the new chair, Khalid Malhar, and wishes him every success in the role.

Lloyds Charity A/C Balance as at 31 Dec 2019: £62,186.45

SLIA Ramadan Appeal 2020

All praise to the Almighty Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

“Those who spend their wealth [in Allah's way] by night and by day, secretly and publicly - they will have their reward with their Lord. And no fear will there be concerning them, nor will they grieve.”

[Surah Al-Baqarah 2:274]

Please donate funds to our annual Ramadan food distribution programme for the poor and needy. This year has been particularly difficult for many due to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Ramadan food distribution programme 2020

- **Hambantota – Suchi Village:** The feeding of 160 families with dry food rations at RS 6,658 per family with a view to Insha Allah help our Muslim brothers and sisters to be in a position to participate in Ramadan along with us all. *This project with associated packaging costs is estimated at £4,553 at an exchange rate of RS 226.86.*
- **Hambantota – Tsunami Village:** The feeding of 175 families with dry rations at RS 6,658 per family and also provision of Khanji for 10 days estimated at RS 7,500 per day. *This project with associated packaging and transport costs is estimated at £5,505 at an exchange rate of RS 226.86.*

Donations for future SLIA events are most welcome. Please contact our President, Secretary or Treasurer to discuss, pledge or notify in advance.

SLIA Mission

SLIA's mission is to promote charitable, social, cultural, sports and educational activities to achieve unity and strengthen relationships in line with our religious and cultural values for the benefit of our members and the communities we engage with

Impact of COVID19 #Ramadanathome - (MCB Guidelines)

Ramadan 2020 will be a very different experience for Muslims as we adapt to changing circumstances during the COVID-19 pandemic, adjusting not only our holy month but our daily lives in accordance with public health guidelines.

This Ramadan, it is unlikely that social distancing measures will be lifted, enabling us to return to our normal routines. Thus, it is unlikely that there will be congregational acts of worship for Muslims outside of the home – no taraweeh prayers at the mosque or anywhere outside of our homes, no spiritual talks in the community or iftars with friends and family to attend. We will all be seeking to adapt to these changes while still enjoying the spiritual lift and community spirit that Ramadan provides.



COVID-19: HOW TO ADAPT OUR RAMADAN

It is important to plan our Ramadan activities given these restrictions. Consider:

- Organising taraweeh at home as a family and pray in congregation.
- Streaming Islamic lectures or taraweeh in your home, either pre-recorded or live (to listen).
- Arranging virtual iftars with loved ones and community members through the many online video calling facilities available.
- Planning your iftar menus in advance so that you can limit multiple shopping trips given social distancing.
- Hydrating well. Dehydration can lead to tiredness, headaches, lack of focus/concentration.
- Eating high energy, slow burn foods for suhoor (starting your fast).
- Remaining energised throughout the workday, especially as we can experience heightened levels of anxiety during these times.
- Taking regular breaks to reflect and take time for yourself. Life can be full, and we try to fill it with more worship during Ramadan. We all want to pray more and this can help with anxiety but it is important to be good to yourself – sometimes it is quality over quantity.

COVID-19: WORKING FROM HOME

Many Muslims are likely to be working from home during this time. While this may have benefits and provide ease in some ways to those fasting, it can also provide some new challenges. Consider the following:

- Ensuring you are taking regular breaks from work for rest and reflection – perhaps around salaah (prayer) times.
- Starting your day earlier if you are permitted to so that you can finish earlier and have some down time prior to iftar.
- Giving your employer and colleagues advance notice that you will be fasting.
- Sharing Ramadan with colleagues by having a conversation or sharing what you're doing for it, what food you're preparing, and what the month means for you.
- Honouring your workplace duties with patience and good grace to those around you. Taking a break if you find yourself frustrated or tired.
- Taking a break if you find yourself frustrated or tired.

Employees who are fasting may ask to take their lunch break at a later time to break their fast depending on their work timings, or to enable them to finish work earlier. Employers may be justified in refusing such a request if this conflicts with legitimate business needs which they are unable to meet in any other ways. However, if they are unable to objectively justify such a refusal, this could amount to unlawful indirect discrimination.

Impact of COVID19 #Ramadanathome

COVID-19: WORKING FROM HOME (Cont..)

Employees who are fasting may ask to take their lunch break at a later time to break their fast depending on their work timings, or to enable them to finish work earlier. Employers may be justified in refusing such a request if this conflicts with legitimate business needs which they are unable to meet in any other ways. However, if they are unable to objectively justify such a refusal, this could amount to unlawful indirect discrimination.

COVID-19: STUDYING FROM HOME

Much like working from home, studying from home without the benefit of your classmates and direct face to face time with your lecturers can have its own challenges. Fasting may tire you out further, and dehydration is often a factor in reducing focus and concentration. Much like with working from home, consider:

- Giving your university, student advisor or professors advance notice that you will be fasting.
- Ensuring you are taking regular breaks from studying for rest and reflection – perhaps around salaah times. Set yourself a study timetable.
- Taking into account salaah, iftar times, as well as class lecture times, when structuring your day.
- Starting the day earlier if your timetable allows you to so that you can finish earlier and have some down time prior to iftar.
- Sharing Ramadan with friends by having a conversation about Ramadan, or sharing what you're doing for it, what food you're preparing, and what the month means for you.
- Honouring your studies and commitments with patience and good grace to those around you. Should you find yourself frustrated or tired, take a break.

COVID-19: IFTARS AT HOME:

“But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah Knows, while you know not.” (2:216)

While we are all longing for the opportunity to get together as families for iftar and share in the blessings together, it is vital that we continue to follow UK Government guidance and only remain with those that we live with until otherwise stated. Though this will mean that we are not able to physically get together as a community during Ramadan, it is for the safety and wellbeing of our loved ones that we must heed these warnings. We must remember that as Muslims, everything is a test from Allah, and it is up to us how we choose to respond to such tests.

COVID-19: VIRTUAL IFTARS:

Due to the likely inability to host in-person iftars this Ramadan, one way to still connect with friends and loved ones is to host a 'virtual iftars', in which individuals or families can join via video conferencing facilities like Zoom, FaceTime or video-calling apps like Skype or WhatsApp. This could be an important way for individuals to stay connected during these times, especially for those who are living alone or away from family.

My Personal take on a Madrasa - Mikyle Ossman

In the west, from my experience, there seems to be a general lack of knowledge and understanding of Islam and its teachings. I feel that this is very true when I reflect upon myself even though I was born into the religion.

When I went back to Sri Lanka last summer, where most of my parents' families reside, an opportunity arose to visit a Madrasa - a school devoted to higher education in Islamic studies. I was surprised to uncover that there were many of these Madrasas dotted throughout the small island where the main religion is Buddhism and Muslims only make up 9% of the population. What amazed me more was that the particular Madrasa that I was planning to visit was established by my great-grand-mother in 1892.

I felt I had no choice but to ditch my holiday plans and journey down south along the west coast of Sri Lanka to the Dutch Galle Fort, where the Al Bahajathul Ibraheemiyah Arabic (BIA) College is located, in order to understand the real inner workings and purpose of a Madrasa.

Even though I was keen and excited to make this journey, I was full of trepidation. This was fuelled by the Easter bombings in Sri Lanka, where 250 plus innocent Christians were killed by a terror group linked to ISIS, which resulted in 350 arrests of mainly Muslim youths as part of an ongoing police operation. So, rightly my family and I were

concerned that I may be accidentally locked up too. With all these challenges, I felt I needed first-hand evidence to prove to my 16-year-old self what a Madrasa stood for. Were they hubs for learning Islamic knowledge, or for preaching extremist ideology against the west and my community at home?

My journey began with the 7:14 am train out of the picturesque Mount Lavinia station, which is two minutes away from the old Sir Thomas Maitland residence, who was the second Governor of British Ceylon. I was able to secure a window seat allowing me to watch the undulating waves of the India Ocean and feel the sea breeze. The 100-km journey down the west coast took two hours. Upon arriving at Galle station, I got a Tuk Tuk that rumbled through the Galle Fort taking me to the Madrasa.

I arrived at a pristine white building which read Al Bahajathul Ibraheemiyah Arabic College. Lessons were in progress as I entered the school. The principal greeted me, and although he knew limited

English, he made me feel



My Personal take on a Madrasa (Cont..)

welcome, offering me late breakfast and explained how the college operated. I introduced myself to a boy named Hashad, a student, aged 21, who was in his last year at the Arabic college; luckily for me, he spoke some 'broken' English, which I used alongside my limited Sinhala to communicate with him and the rest of the 30 or so boys. This was a blessing as I was able to converse and live with the boys in their dormitory. I feel this gave me a much better understanding of what went on day-to-day at the college and the real purpose of each boy's attendance at the college.

The whole day is set around the second pillar of Islam, the five daily prayers that every Muslim needs to perform. Every day begins extremely early in the madrasa at 4:00 am. The waking up process is almost military fashion.. lights on, fans off and then the bell rings. Thereafter the morning prayers are conducted in a group led by one of the boys. Then the boys rhythmically recited verses from the Quran for approximately an hour. Lessons start at 7:30 after breakfast and free time which I used to sleep as I was not used to the early start, whilst most boys, read and did homework. Lessons finished for the morning at 10:50 and I was then told it was "sleeping time" -necessary due to the early start. Everyone slept for an hour and fifteen minutes. The students referred to the building where we slept as a hostel, it was very basic but cool as the windows welcomed the sea breeze and

a view of the ramparts of the old Galle Fort. Then we were woken up for the second prayer of the day followed by lunch. Lessons continued after lunch up till 3:50 pm where they read the third prayer for the day. This is followed by free time till six o'clock, evening prayers at sunset, prep, the night prayer and recitals of the Quran, followed by dinner and bed.

This routine seems rigid and strict, but this was far from the truth. To my amazement, there was a variety of subjects branching out of the realm of Islam with critical thinking and debating involved in the curriculum. No doubt the subjects included the standard, Arabic, Sinhala, the mother tongue, but also philosophy, logic and astronomy.

The boys themselves appeared to be just ordinary kids hanging out together, but I was able to understand that they were there for a higher purpose.



My Personal take on a Madrasa (Cont..)

In the UK we mostly educate ourselves to make a living whereas these boys are doing it for greater spirituality and to try and help the wider community. Most of them planned to be Imams and teachers, whilst others decided to get ordinary jobs utilising their broadened linguistic skills.

However, what will become of these boys could they be blindly misled and brainwashed when they go to their wider communities, what type of Islam will they take with them? Is it the authentic ways of the Prophet (peace be upon him) or one of these new fundamentalist dogmatic views of Islam, as it is one thing is to learn your religion and preach to others, but the toughest is to correctly practise it.

Creature comforts were very basic. There were no beds, so I slept on the floor with the boys, the toilets like in some part of Europe was a hole in the ground, and the showers were communal. All the eating too was done sitting cross-legged on a mat on the floor with 6 boys sharing from a large bowl called a 'savan.' One win for me was the food, I found the food to be extremely tasty throughout my stay, with my best meal being the last. This included rice, fried beef and beef curry, with 2 vegetable curries – cauliflower & beetroot.

As expected, it was initially difficult to integrate and get the boys' trust and friendship. As an outsider to what I thought to be a tightly knit community at the college, my presence turned

heads, but they always accompanied with a smile.

As I slept with the boys and followed the same schedule as them, I got to know them more intimately. When I started to interact with them during the unsupervised free periods, I got to know many of the pupils' background stories and aspirations. Most of the boys come from moderate or very poor backgrounds.

All of them were very soft-spoken, kind and gentle human beings. For example, a simple kind act of bringing me tea and biscuits was repeated quite often without my asking, making me feel very embarrassed. I felt the boys tried to follow the Quran as a way of life wherever possible, which made them kind and unique for their ages. Boys helped to maintain the college whilst another boy weaved a chair for fun. The older boys were also very accepting and understanding when they were not allowed play cricket on the Galle promenade or venture into town as the headmaster was concerned that they may be arrested by the police in a case of mistaken identity under Emergency Laws. I thought they would have been frustrated and angry against the state and the Buddhist community, with a handful of extremists having burnt down Muslim shops and business. However, they felt completely the opposite.

My Personal take on a Madrasa (Cont..)

They vehemently informed me the terrorists were wholeheartedly to blame for their predicament and they had an implicit duty to teach the correct moderate Islam to the Muslim Sri Lankan community and change the views of the radicals.

Zamrin, a 16-year-old with three more years left at the Madrassa, particularly impressed me. He told me that after college, his long-term desire was to unite all the religions and races of Sri Lanka to live in harmony. I felt he genuinely believed this, as he had no pressure to appear overly pious towards me. His response was unexpected and took me by surprise, especially due to the current Islamophobic climate in Sri Lanka after the Easter bombings.

Others did not have a vision for their life. Hashad, told me of his plans for the Eid Festival of visiting his siblings, but, for the future, he is unsure of the steps he is going to take but knowing four languages he thinks he can work in Qatar. A few of the boys wanted to eventually return to teach in the college after experiencing life as an imam in their communities. The boys believe their Madrasa is the “very best” college in Sri Lanka.

My limited time at the Madrasa shows not at all the stereotypical image portrayed by the media or the ill perception of many in the world. The boys were properly educated and learnt Islam and more. Furthermore, the nature of the boys and the

teachers show that they were far from extreme or any other negative tag. The teachers have a close relationship with the students as they make jokes in lessons but are still respected by the boys. The boys themselves are amazing. They are filled with kindness and make me want to be a better person. However, I have not been to every Madrasa so I cannot comment on the state of all madrasas in Sri Lanka or the wider world. But if they are even shadows of BIA College, they are fine.

I must admire my great-grandmother who had the vision to set up a wonderful institution and all of her family for still ensuring it runs smoothly to date. God willing their good work continues.

Notes to the Editor:

My name is Mikyle Ossman. I'm 16 years old and made my journey to the madrassa during my post GCSE holidays. I am privileged to attend Dulwich College, as a sports scholar. I played for the under 12 Surrey County cricket team and have captained the school cricket team.

The Madrassas Al Bahajathul Ibraheemiyah Arabic College Fort Galle established in 1892, one of the oldest Islamic Arabic institutions in Sri Lanka which is world-renowned. The BIA College was founded by Marhooma O.L.M. Macan Markar. Over the period of 127 years, the college has produced many scholars in the field of Islamic Studies who have successfully served the country and Islam as 'Arabic Orators', 'Principals of Arabic Colleges', 'Imams', Lecturers, and 'Islamic scholars' etc.

'Ramadan is like a rare flower that blossoms once a year and just as you begin to smell its fragrance it disappears for another year'

SLIA Membership Subscriptions 2020

Please can all members pay the 2020 subscriptions which was **due on 1st January 2020**. In addition to paying any previous outstanding subscriptions could you also ensure we have your current contact details. If not already in place, please also consider paying your subscriptions by standing order.

Should you wish to action any of the above, please contact the Treasurer:

Imtiaz Muhseen treasurer@slia.org.uk

If you are aware of new members who wish to join the SLIA please request them to contact any member of the Committee.

Bank Account Lloyds, Walthamstow
Sort Code 30-99-08
Account No. 01663411

Membership Type	Price
Life Membership (Single)	£250
Family Membership (Husband, wife & children under 18)	£30
Family Membership (Husband & wife over 60)	£15
Individual Membership	£15
Individual Membership (Over 60)	£7.50
Student Membership	£4



Mr/Mrs/Miss/Other _____ Forename _____

Surname _____

Address _____

Post code _____ Cheque No. _____

Zakat £ _____ Education £ _____

Sadaqah £ _____ Ramadan Appeal £ _____

Gift Aid Please tick if you are a UK taxpayer and your donation is eligible for Gift Aid

Please make cheques payable to Sri Lanka Islamic (UK) Association and return to:
The Treasurer, SLIA (UK), 7 Broadway Buildings, Boston Road, London W7 3TT.

Direct/Electronic payments to the Lloyds Bank Account:
Sri Lanka Islamic (UK) Association Account Number 21061860 Sort Code 30-99-08