

MINUTES (some details omitted)

Of

**The Meeting for the Launch of GO Fund (Gojra Ophthalmology Fund)
Held at the House of Commons, London, Committee Room No. 19
Tuesday, 29 February 2000, 6.30 to 8 pm**

The Trust Members

**Prof.S.K Upadhyay Professor of Ophthalmology (in Chair)
Mr.Marsha Singh (Member of Parliament Bradford West)**

Mr. Jamil Akhtar of Cambridge (Vice President)

Dr Saqib Akram of Glasgow

M. Jehanzeb Sefi of London

(Honorary Secretary)

Dr. M. Islamullah of London

Dr. A. A. Majid(Honorary Ophthalmic Adviser)

(Co chairperson, SAARC Foundation UK)

Mrs. Mariam Saira Alim

Mr. Asam Alim

Mr. Mohammad Arshad

Prof M. Rafiq of Sialkot

Dr Shalesh Kaushal (Harvard University)

Mr. Naveed Ahmed

Mr. Jahangir Alam

Mrs. Jamila Alam

Miss Amina Ahmad

Miss Zainab Ahmad

Miss Zohra Ahmad

Mr. Mahboob Ahmad

Ms. Noreen Butt

Mr. M. P. Malak

Prof. Ajmal Qureshi

Miss Attiyha Qureshi

Miss Muna Jafferji

Mr. Ghulam Hussain

Mr. M. S. Anjum

Mr. Mohammed Ahsan

Miss. Urvi Shah

Mr. Arshad Abbas

Mr. M. Mahmood

Mr. S. M. Zia-ul-Haq

Mrs. Heather C. Majid

2. Briefing about the Gojra Eye Complex (GEC)

The background of this project was known to most of the participants and the others were given a brief insight into it by Dr. Majid.

Updating on the GEC

Dr. Majid (Co-Chairperson of the SAARC Foundation UK), who visited Gojra five times since the aforementioned eye camp in October 1995, went to Pakistan in January 2000. He chaired a meeting of the Gojra Eye Care Trust at which other salient personalities like the President of the GO Fund, Dr. Abdul Majid Chaudhry, and the most significant supporter, Haji M. Aslam of Faisalabad, were present. The minutes of this meeting, held on 31 January 2000, is attached hereto.

Dr. Majid, during his last visit met the Provincial Health Minister in Lahore and some senior officers in Islamabad to pursue the charitable registration of the "Gojra Eye Care Trust". It is necessary because, as per the advice of the UK Department of International Development, such a registered charity can ask the Islamabad British High Commission to forward a proposal to the UK Government for a grant. At present the UK gives Pakistan grants totalling £60 million. It is hoped at least a £1 million grant may be requested from UK Government.

Dr. Majid, along with Mr. Farooq Shah met the new Pakistani High Commissioner, Prof. Akbar Ahmed, in London on 24 February 2000. The object of the meeting was request him to assist in the prompt completion of the registration of the Gojra Eye Care Trust so that the recommendation for grant aid could be referred by the Government of Pakistan to the Islamabad British High Commission. Prof. Ahmed has given his full commitment to help in this matter. He deems the GEC Project to be a laudable humanitarian venture worthy of support by any man of compassion and he promised to write to the Federal Secretary of State to finalise the requisite registration.

3. Fund Raising Events

The Vice-President of the GO Fund, Mr. Jamil Akhter, organised the first fundraising event to aid the construction of the GEC on 26 September 1999. About £3100 was raised in this function. Later on when Mr. Akhtar came he informed the meeting that, even though there is a small ethnic population in Cambridge, the function was well supported. He particularly drew attention to the fact that many people were informed about the project and they were spiritually involved in the struggle to complete and operate it.

The second function was arranged on 5 December 1999 by Dr. Majid in Walthamstow, London. About £7500 was raised. Dr. Majid informed the meeting that there was a remarkable display of enthusiasm by the attendees who were keen to help the needy people in a rural region in Pakistan and see the GEC completed as soon as possible. He particularly referred to the presence of Lord Nazir Ahmed and Prof. S. K. Upadhyay at the function who galvanised the people to donate generously. Dr. Majid drew the attention of the participants to the fact that if every one of the 250 persons in the hall had paid the £10 ticket then the proceeds would have been £2500 minus expenses. However, £7500 was raised which shows over £5000 was by way of generous public donations in support of the function.

The reports of these two functions are attached to these minutes.

4. Constitution of the GO Fund

To assist the campaigners to operate the “GO Fund” as a charity, the circulated draft of the constitution was approved by the meeting unanimously. Authority was specifically given to Dr. Majid to make minor adjustments to the constitution to meet any requirement of the Charity Commission.

Dr. Majid referred to Clause 5 of the constitution and requested the meeting to approve the office bearers. The meeting unanimously approved the individuals who have already accepted the positions as follows:-

President, Dr. Abdul Majid Chaudhary (a philanthropist)

Vice-President Dr. Saqib Akram (a senior civil servant)

Vice-President, Mr. Marsha Singh MP (Bradford West)

Vice-President, Mr. Jamil Akhtar (an hotelier)

Honorary Treasurer, Haji M. Anwar (a businessman)

Honorary Secretary, M. Jehanzeb Sefi (businessman & artist).

Noting specifically that Dr. M. Islamullah was no more a member of the Board of Trustees of the SAARC Foundation UK, Dr. Majid proposed that he should be invited to the Management Board of the GO Fund as an Honorary Ophthalmic Adviser. This proposal was seconded by Prof. Upadhyay and approved unanimously.

The General Meeting delegated to the Management Board to fill in the other vacancies on the Board when suitable candidates were found.

5. Presentation of Dr. Shalesh Kaushal

Prof. S. K. Upadhyay introduced Dr. Kaushal. With the impressive record of carrying out 9500 retinal operations, Dr. Kaushal is at the forefront of ophthalmology and is a part a global pioneering team (which has already made a breakthrough) searching for treatment for retinal ailments.

Dr Kaushal said, the most common cause of blindness is cataracts. However, the multiple studies done in S. E. Asia cannot be ignored. They demonstrate that the equally common cause of blindness is diabetes / glaucoma. He recommended that the eye complex in Gojra should also accommodate a retinal specialist area. He said that the Complex can evolve in phases and the retinal surgeons can go over there and train the local specialists and provide retinal surgery to deserving patients.

Dr. Kaushal was optimistic about the completion of the Complex due to the spirit and enthusiasm of the local people and supporters of the project. He said that he felt “personally excited about this project” and offered that when appropriate he will be most willing to go to GEC and help the people there.

6. Some Encouraging Remarks

Dr. Majid who had played a role in the arrangement of the October 1995 Free Eye Camp in Gojra and Prof. Upadhyay and Dr. Islamullah who were two of the four SAARC Foundation ophthalmologists in that Camp were in the audience. Dr. Majid told how the Punjab Provincial Health Secretary had directed the local health officials to vacate 80% of the Gojra General Hospital for the Camp (the remaining 20%, of course, was left running to deal with the on-going patients). This meant that most of the problems connected with running the Camp in tents were avoided. The dedication and the professional care were so high that the Camp attained a better rate of success in surgery than that attained in the advanced hospitals in Pakistan.

Prof. Upadhyay spotlighted the pure enthusiasm of the local volunteer workers who numbered about 50. They worked from early in the morning until late into the night for 15 days. They were not people of means but they gave this service free of charge. One of them (and he was not alone to make such an extraordinary gesture) said "God has given me two eyes; Doctor please take one and implant it for the benefit of the patient" (who needed a cornea). Prof. Upadhyay said this offer was marvellous given the fact that the volunteer was not related to the patient in any way.

Dr. Islamullah who, as Dr. Majid introduced, had gone to the Camp at his own expense and, even though Gojra organisers were less than prompt in arranging an event for him, went to Gojra and conducted a training session there. He imparted some state of the art surgical techniques to the eye specialists from Gojra and surrounding towns. Dr. Islamullah said that the inhabitants of Gojra were very keen to have the British surgeons back. They were repeatedly asking, "When are you coming to Gojra again". He said that Gojra is one of the most suitable localities to build a facility like the GEC.

The fourth person who had visited Gojra and was in the attendees was Mr. Jamil Akhtar (Vice President of the GO Fund). He said that he had visited Gojra with scepticism about the people but he was struck by the pure commitment of the local Trustees. "They are people of substantial means and the only thing they are interested in is to do something for the benefit of poor masses." Prof. Upadhyay commented that it was good that Mr. Akhtar's commitment is rooted in the personal knowledge of the Gojra Trustees.

Those who know the persons in the above list of attendees will, of course, know that they have generous hearts (some of them have already made a fiscal donation to the GO fund). One of them, Prof. M. Rafiq of Sialkot, symbolising the mood of the meeting made an impassioned contribution to the proceedings. He congratulated the GO Fund activists on doing something commendable for the people who need eye care desperately. He pledged to use his influence and standing in Sialkot to raise funds and undertook to visit Gojra. He said, "The Pakistanis will exhibit a surprisingly high level of generosity to support GEC which is a truly humanitarian project." Prof. Rafiq suggested that the concept of the GEC should also be considered for Faisalabad, Lahore and Sialkot, three major urban city centres of Punjab.

7. Any Other Business

Dr. Majid reminded the participants to complete the membership forms and newly elected Honorary Secretary, Mr. Sefi, collected them. There being no other business, the meeting ended at 8 p.m.