



New Year celebrations

Nowruz Day

New Year–New Beginning

And the launch of

European Campaign for Human Rights in Afghanistan (ECHRA)

Our Nowruz celebration went extremely well as it started with greeting and welcoming the guests, traditional songs and music from Nadir Zirak which allowed a few of our youths to get up and dance.

We were also treated to some very traditional music performance by Professor John Baily, who played the ‘Rubab’ and ‘Dutar’, Veronica Doubleday, who played ‘vocal and daireh’ Jan Hendrickse, bansori and ney, Dan Cameron, tabla and Somaye Zadeh who played the drum.

We were all then treated to the articles and poetry by Suraya Hadafmand, Faridah Sediqi, Laila Yousofi, Shabnam and Shoaib Nasimi which added more pleasure and meaning to the event prior to tasting the delicious food.

After the break we were given a special demonstration by Maria Ilmo Saavedro of a traditional Columbian dance wearing a striking dress in the national colour of Columbia which was then followed by more personal reflections on the meaning of Nowruz by Parwana Said and Arzo Naubahar which again gave the audience time to reflect on Afghanistan.



Mr Nadir Zirak returned to the stage to change the mood once again and to bring more music to the event. It was at this stage that Dr Nasimi gave a summary of the working and success of the Afghanistan & Central Asian Association. After his initial talk he introduced Peter Eyre, a Middle East Consultant and activist who started his speech in a very unusual and meaningful way.



Peter had made arrangements with Rabia Nasimi to get all the young children to come forward for a very special ceremony which also involved some of the younger adults.

Peter made an announcement that although this is a time of celebration we must not forget all those that have died as a result of torture or human rights abuse and also all those that have died as a result of the current war.

The children were called to come up on stage and place their rose at a very special central location that Peter had designed into a semicircle of candles. He also invited the public to also come forward to pay their respects to all those that had made the eternal sacrifice. This ceremony certainly created a unique atmosphere and Peter was surprised to see all the people come up on stage and relocate all the roses before going back to their seats.



It was at this stage that Peter asked everyone to stand and cross their hearts in the traditional way and to respect a one minute silence. This was a very moving event and was finished by Peter who made a brief comment. Peter then continued to give a

summary of Human Rights and stated the importance of all Afghanistans in every city in the UK and EU to stand together and make this project work.

Finally Mr Eyre handed the microphone over to Dr Nasimi and asked him to formally open the new project - European Campaign for Human Rights in Afghanistan (ECHRA).

Mr. Eyre then had to leave us for his long drive back to Derbyshire.

The rest of the evening continued with a remarkable Fashion Show, which consisted of traditional Tajiki, Balochi, Uzbeki and Afghanistani clothes worn by Francis, Leila, Maria, Neela, Irena and Arzo. This was organized by Miss Sajida Hashemi, presenter of Venus TV and student at Copland Community School which was also of great success and changed the mood of the evening once again.



Mrs. Arzo Naubahar recited a poem regarding Nowruz. This was very moving and left people in tears of joy.

Somaye Zadeh, a student from Goldsmiths College played the Tomback (a sort of Iranian zirbaghali), and also sang, she had great rhythm and a great voice which was very pleasant. This led to John Bailey, who is well known for playing the traditional instruments of Afghanistan 'Rubab' and 'Herati DuTar'. This was a very calm and pleasant way of ending this lovely evening.

However, we were lucky to be given an extra 30 minutes which meant that Nader Zirak was able to finish the event with some very upbeat music which allowed both women and men to dance in expressing their happiness and joy to the New Year which had finally come once again.

At the end, Arzo Naubahar and Jawed Jabari finished the event by thanking the organizer: Dr Nasimi, Director of Afghanistan and Central Asian Association, Goldsmiths College University, volunteers, presenters, participants for making this event such a great success and wished everyone a Happy, Joyful and Prosperous New Year.

End of Event