

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **The Mela attracting thousands of visitors on Sunday the 4th of July, amidst local and international media, celebrated the cultural cohesion in the heart of bustling London.**

This year thousands of people gathered to celebrate the melting pot art and culture of modern Britain in style at The Mela 2010 held on Sunday the 4th of July, organised by the Central London Communities.

The Mela<sup>1</sup> is a cross-cultural event for all ages aimed to promote cultural cohesion, integration, and enhance communication and interactions through involvement in various arts and community activities.

People were enjoying the music, dance, artworks, crafts, fashion show, open stage talent show, youth performances, children's activities, health activities, funfair & rides, henna paintings, variety stalls, information stands, stunning displays & exhibitions, and of course the delicious Mela orientated food & drinks!

The festival took place in London's Regent's Park (and Primrose Hill) – one of the eight Royal Parks visited by millions of Londoners and tourists each year. As well as the legendary guest artist, Mac<sup>2</sup>, from the sub-continent, the main stage included performers from all sections of the local communities.

As usual, The Mela facilitated a dedicated youth stage for the young and ambitious members of the society to show-off their talents and skills – in a recognisable fashion. Indeed, it serves as a spring-board to launch their career in arts and media. An important aspect of this is to channel youth energy into shaping a tolerant and sustainable multiracial and multicultural society for the future.

As our Prime Minister Rt. Hon. David Cameron said at the British Curry Awards 2009 *"This Britain, this modern diverse, multi racial, multi talented Great Britain – this is here to stay."*

In his foreword to the Mela souvenir, patron Enam Ali MBE<sup>3</sup> said: *"I realise however that there are real challenges for the future. That is one reason why it is good to celebrate the success of inter communal harmony. Celebrating success helps to inspire others too."*

In a message to the Mela committee Mac said: *"It does feel good to be in the fold of a lot of wonderful and exuberant people in the UK - much as it gives me great pleasure to be invited to perform with some fine musicians at the Mela."*

When asked what differentiates this Mela, the committee secretary Maddy Fisk said: *“This Mela is unique in the sense that it is ingrained in the community. It showcases the success and achievements of our women & children, our schools & colleges, our cultural & community centres, and our private & public sector social initiatives. It is inspiring to see the turnout and more inspiring to meet such a variety of different people.”*

*“Through this Mela we are always engaged in promoting public issues such as various Safety initiatives, Mental Health education, social responsibilities, etc.”* added the spokesperson, Sadia Jafreen.

What started as a small Bangladeshi community gathering in 1992, expanded its reach to a London-wide and now nation-wide celebration, backed by well known institutions and organisations such as The British Museum, Royal Parks, British Land, London Borough of Camden, London Design House, The Metropolitan Police, Mary Ward Centre, South Camden Community School, Art Colleges, King’s Cross Central, Primary Care Trust, Sky Channels 814 (Channel S), 827 (ATN), 844 (Channel i) and Purple-i Technologies to name but a few.

The committee<sup>4</sup> welcomes everyone to visit the British Museum from Tuesday 6th July for displays of community works and next Saturday 10th of July from 12pm - 4pm, for a dedicated exhibition of The MELA Art Project, dance drama and family activities.

**ENDS**

**For further information contact**

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Notes to Editors

**1. The Mela**

'Mela' is a Sanskrit word meaning 'gathering' or 'to meet' or a Fair. It is used in the Subcontinent for all sizes of gathering and can be religious, commercial, or cultural. Traditionally Mela means 'Village Fair'.

'The Mela' held each year in the heart of London celebrates and shares the culture of London's multi racial communities. It is a feast of sights, sounds, smells and tastes featuring bazaars, folk troupes, traditional and contemporary British & Ethnic music and dance.

Started life in 1992, it is the first of its kind to be held in London involving local organisations, community groups, schools, colleges, and institutions such as the British Museum and the British Library.

From its humble beginnings as a small Bangladeshi community festival, it has been dubbed as 'The Camden Mela', 'The Regent's Park Mela', 'The Central London Mela', and for obvious reasons 'The Bangladesh Mela'.

Though the officially adopted name 'The Camden Bangladesh Mela' still remains, the Mela Committee is considering more inclusive and relevant name to encompass the true essence of the evolved Mela – as it has grown to such an extent that it represents an opportunity for the wider communities to get together, regardless of their background, and work towards a festive occasion through involvement in various educational and arts projects that promote appreciation and understanding of various cultures in one of the world's greatest multicultural city.

The Mela uses arts to challenge the negative perceptions of multiculturalism; it aims to breakdown the barriers to give way to social inclusion, integration, and harmony whilst appreciating diversity for a healthy society.

Serving as an ideal outlet the Mela showcases the outcome of many activities carried out throughout the year by the schoolchildren and their parents as well as the youth organisations and community centres in Central London.

All in all, it culminates into a spectacular event for all ages to enjoy in the height of the British summer organised by the Mela committee in association with Camden Council, Royal Parks, British Land and the British Museum.

## **2. The Legend Maqsood /a.k.a. Mac**

The writer, composer, singer of the iconic Mela song "melay jaire..." (meaning: "going to the Mela..."), is a pioneer in progressive Bangladeshi music and a well-known figure among fans in the country's rock fraternity.

Having performed as the lead vocalist for the then mainstream band 'FEEDBACK' for almost 20 years, in 1996 he formed a new band **Maqsood O' dHAKA**, the first ever band from South Asia to fuse JAZZ and ROCK with Ethnic music from Bangladesh.

**Maqsood O' dHAKA** is formed based on the philosophy provided by Mac's lyrics and music.

## **3. Enam Ali MBE**

Editor of Spice Business Magazine and the founder of British Curry Awards, Enam Ali MBE, is one of the most prominent Asian personalities in the United Kingdom.

Known for his leadership and passionate concern for the interests of the Spice Industry which makes a significant contribution to the UK economy, representing £3.2 billion, 100,000 jobs and the enrichment of the national culinary experience.

He is frequently to be seen and heard in the UK's print and TV media acting as a spokesman for the sector and as a commentator on various public issues.

#### **4. The Mela Committee**

FITZROVIA NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRE  
Samina Dewan (Chair)

CAMDEN COUNCIL  
Councillor Nasim Ali  
(Chair until May 2010)

CORAM PARENTS CENTRE  
Tasneem Khan (Treasurer)

MARY WARD CENTRE  
Maddy Fisk (Secretary)

LONDON DESIGN HOUSE  
Sadia Jafreen (Creative & Media Planning)

BRITISH MUSEUM  
Laura Phillips

KING'S CROSS BRUNSWICK  
NEIGHBOURHOOD ASSOCIATION  
Sofina Razzaque  
Harun Kaji  
Cllr Abdul Hai

MELA CULTURAL CO-ORDINATORS  
Rina Khan  
Humayun Kabir Ayas

SOUTH CAMDEN COMMUNITY SCHOOL  
Anna Woodfield until April 2010  
Colleen Maybin from April 2010  
Tia Clarke

CAMDEN YOUTH & CONNEXION SERVICE  
Mukith Miah  
Karim Ullah

HOPSCOTCH ASIAN WOMEN CENTRE  
Lucky Khan

BANGLAR SUR

Syed Rafiqul Islam Suhel

REZA TALUKDER  
NASIMA KHANOM  
MOMOTAZ BEGUM

For more information, visit [camdenbangladeshmela.org](http://camdenbangladeshmela.org).