

Press Release

JMI Hosts Workshop on 'Cultural Connects and Diplomatic Dialogues' ; Felicitates its Distinguished Alumni - Justice Harvir Singh, Allahabad High Court and Dr. Hanif Qureshi, IPS

New Delhi, November 02, 2025

As part of its 105th Foundation Day celebrations, **Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI)** hosted a high-powered panel discussion titled "*Cultural Connects, Diplomatic Dialogues: The Indian Way in the 21st Century*" at the university's Ansari Auditorium. The distinguished panel included **Shri V. Srinivas, IAS**, Secretary, Government of India, Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and the Department of Pension and Pensioners' Welfare. ; **Shri Faiz Ahmad Kidwai, IAS**, Director General, Directorate General of Civil Aviation, and **Ambassador Virendra Gupta, IFS (Retd.)**, Former Director General, Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

They were joined by **Prof. Mazhar Asif**, Vice Chancellor, JMI; **Prof. Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi**, Registrar, JMI; Prof. Neelofer Afzal, Dean of Students' Welfare; Prof. Rajiv Nayan, NMCPDR and Prof. Aslam Khan, NMCPDR, in a rich and engaging dialogue on India's unique approach to diplomacy, one which is rooted in ethics, dialogue, and cultural values.

In his opening remarks, **Prof. Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi** emphasized that "Indian diplomacy was never born in bureaucratic corridors of power, but shaped through the ages in the philosophical imagination of sages anchored in ethics, culture, and religion." He asserted that the key to peace in today's fractured world lies in *soft power, dialogue, and empathy*. Highlighting how culture serves as a bridge of understanding, Prof. Rizvi cited examples such as yoga and Ayurveda, which have connected India to the world. "Indian diplomacy," he said, "has always emphasized 'thought' as a means of connection and not the use of force." Echoing **Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's** message that this is "not an era of war, but of dialogue and diplomacy," he added that India's soft power provides "the moral foundation and emotional grammar" of the nation's foreign policy.

Speaking on JMI's legacy, **Mr. Faiz Ahmad Kidwai** described the university as "not just a university, but an idea, a living representation of India's soul." He emphasized that education should "not only sharpen the mind but also strengthen the heart," underscoring courage, faith, and conviction as its core values. Elaborating on "*The Indian Way*," Mr. Kidwai described it as a philosophy that balances tradition and modernity, ambition and humility, rooted in the ancient ideal of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*, the belief that 'the world is one family'. He described the 'Indian way' as one that

chooses *compassion over conquest* and *wisdom over wealth*, promoting coexistence in an increasingly polarized world. Mr. Kidwai further urged the audience to embrace "dialogue, not dominance," and to practice "listening before judging." Stressing the need for a "diplomacy of the heart rather than of the head," he called on young people to "connect, not conquer."

Ambassador Virendra Gupta reflected on India's rich culture and history of exchange and assimilation of ideas from around the world, noting how Indian food, art, cinema, and values have fostered connections across continents. He observed that India's cultural fabric draws from knowledge bequeathed on us from the *Vedas* and assimilation of diverse influences flowing from Afghanistan, Persia, and Mongolia, among others, creating a vibrant composite heritage. Ambassador Gupta lauded India's **33 million-strong diaspora**, noting that with the inclusion of the Roma community, the global Indian diaspora totals nearly **60 million**, making it the largest in the world. This diaspora, he said, "continues to spread India's message of unity, harmony, and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*."

Ambassador Gupta also emphasized that India's philosophy of meeting the needs of the family first, then the world resonates with countries such as those in Africa, which seek genuine partnership with India based on familial ties and shared experience rather than material power.

Concluding the session, **Shri V. Srinivas, IAS**, congratulated Jamia Millia Islamia on completing its 105 years to become one of India's most cherished and progressive institutions. He said Jamia exemplifies the lofty principles and spirit contained in its motto 'Taught man that which he knew not' as the university continues to light the lives of generations of students. He commended Jamia's achievements and described India's cultural diplomacy as "a blend of ancient wisdom and modern pragmatism." Highlighting the importance of technology in bringing citizens and government closer, he noted that JMI is uniquely positioned to harness technology to foster global connections and cultural exchange. He underscored two important moments of Indian diplomacy and leadership, namely, the G20 Presidency which exemplified India's philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. "The G20 Presidency converted into a people's movement across 60 cities and etched India's global dreams into the world map", he added. The other moment was the Global South engagement which is steeped in the spirit of 'everyone's growth and everyone's trust' as its key ethos, Mr Srinivas said.

In his Presidential Address, **Vice Chancellor Prof. Mazhar Asif** remarked, "India has been a hub of cultural diversity and pluralism since times immemorial. You name any religion, sub-religion, or linguistic community, and you will find it in India, all flourishing together in harmony." He emphasized that "Indian culture and tradition are not modern inventions but age-old legacies," pointing out that while over 50 ancient civilizations which were contemporaneous to Indian civilization have disappeared, India continues to

thrive because of "the tranquil depth and strength of its cultural ethos and the richness of its plural and diverse heritage."

Reflecting on India's early cultural contact with Persia, Prof. Asif added, "From the stories of the *Panchatantra* to the teachings of Kabir, Indian culture has always taught the world how to live selflessly and to care for the good of all. It is important to remember that India has never invaded any country, and through this, it has taught the world an important lesson on shared living and co-existence."

Later in the day, the Office of the Dean Alumni Affairs organised a panel discussion cum alumni meet and felicitation ceremony in which **well known JMI alumni, Shri Harvir Singh, Hon'ble Justice, Allahabad High Court** along with another JMI alumni, **Dr. Hanif Qureshi, IPS, Additional Secretary, Automobile Division, Ministry of Heavy Industries**, Government of India served as the Chief Guest. They addressed a gathering of a large number of alumni as part of the alumni meet, in the presence of VC, JMI, Prof Mazhar Asif and Registrar, JMI, Prof Md. Mahtab Alam Rizvi along with the Dean Alumni Affairs, Prof Asif Husain and DSW, Prof Neelofer Afzal at the Ansari Auditorium.

Prof Rizvi addressing the alumni said that it is a special feeling to welcome so many alumni to the university on the occasion of the 105th Foundation Day of the university. Calling the alumni of any university, its backbone, who play a central role in building perception about any institution, he said that it is heartening to see the high national and international rankings of JMI today. He submitted to the alumni to strengthen their connection and build a stronger network and said that it was VC JMI, Prof Asif and his dream to set up a Medical College and Hospital and asked the alumni to come forward and support their institution in fulfilling this aspiration. Prof Neelofer Afzal spoke about the revival of the Talimi Mela and the efforts that went into bringing it back in its full glory with the extended 6-day celebrations which has not been seen over the last one and a half decades.

Justice Harvir Singh who completed his B. Sc. (Hons.), M.Sc. (Hons.), M.A., LLB. - all from Jamia Millia Islamia and has spent over 10 years at the university as a student, spoke nostalgically of his 42 year old connection with JMI saying that he "actually never left the institution. JMI was always my home". Recalling the SRK Hostel, the Jamia librarian and the Nagina stores where he and his friends would go out for a cup of tea, he reminded the alumni to keep contributing to their institution and to the society.

Dr. Hanif Qureshi reminiscing his years at Jamia when he was studying B. Tech in 1992 before earning an M.Tech, MBA, and a PhD from JMI, said that today felt like 'coming back home' and recalled the other illustrious alumni of JMI, among others, Shahrukh Khan and Virendra Sehwag, whose work, fame and recognition in their respective fields speak volumes about Jamia's contributions to the nation. "Now it is time for the alumni to think how they can serve their alma mater", he added.

Dr. Rita Sharma, Director, State Council of Educational Research and Training SCERT, Govt. of NCT of Delhi, who was also felicitated this evening spoke fondly of her years at JMI in the 1990s and hailed the universities contributions in shaping the careers of so many of its outstanding alumni who are serving the nation in various capacities. "JMI taught me the greatest of values- *taleem*, *tahzeeb* and *tarbiyat*", Dr. Sharma added.

On this occasion the Jamia Millia Islamia calendar designed by a faculty member from the Department of Painting, Faculty of Fine Arts, JMI, Mr. Shah Abul Faiz, was also released.

Prof. Saima Saeed
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