UPCOMING DATES

May 1-3, 2015
28th FEZANA Pre-AGM and AGM. Hosted by ZAPANJ. Details on page 3.

April 19, 2015

May 10, 2015
Application Deadline for FEZANA 6WZYC2015 Subsidy.

May 16-17, 2015
North American Mobed Council (NAMC) Annual General Meeting. Washington D.C. NAMC

October 15-19, 2015

December 18-20, 2015

Dec 28, 2015-Jan 2, 2016
6th World Zarastrian Youth Congress. Auckland, NZ http://www.6wzyc.co.nz/

FEZANA wishes a very Happy, Healthy and Prosperous Navroze/Nourouz to fellow Zarathusthis and to our friends across North America and worldwide.

FEZANA Subsidy for Young Zarathushtis to Attend 6WZYC 2015

Funds have been approved by FEZANA to provide subsidies to 40 (Forty) Zarathushti youth from USA and Canada to attend the 6th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (6WZYC2015) in Auckland, New Zealand in December 2015. FEZANA will provide a subsidy of $500 per person.

Contact Sherazade Mehta (sherezadem @ yahoo.com) or Saghar Javanshir (sjbehroozi @ verizon.net) for eligibility details and application. Application deadline is May 10, 2015.

FEZANA encourages its Member associations to match or exceed the FEZANA subsidy of $500 per person.

Video: The Persian Rite of Spring
Commissioned and Sponsored by The Farhang Foundation, this is a video of a multimedia performance by Niloufar Talebi and Bobak Salehi. at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. [approx 7 min]
http://zoroastrians.net/2015/03/05/the-persian-rite-of-spring-nauruz/

Video: Navroze – The New Day
This film from India was screened at the United Nations last month as part of the celebrations of the International Day of NowRuz – Preserving an Intangible Heritage of Humanity.

The Film captures the essence of how Navroz is celebrated in India. It aims to bring to the world the uniqueness of the Parsi/Irani community in India and how they celebrate and give thanks. The film takes one through the single day of Navroz, taking the viewer on a journey, through various spaces, of what a typical New Year day is like in a Parsi household - from quiet piety at dawn to a gregarious feast at dusk. [approx 4.5 min]
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9XGWgdTUW Ao&feature=youtu.be
Over 13 days in March, 14 young Zarathushtis from USA, Canada, Pakistan and India participated in the Track B of the Zoroastrian Return To Roots Tour 2015 in India. Seven of these youth, between the ages of 22 and 35, hailed from North America.

The Zoroastrian Return to Roots is a PARZOR administered initiative that began in 2013. The second tour in the program brought participants through New Delhi, Mumbai, Pune, Nargol, Sanjan, Navsari, Surat, Bharuch, Dahanu, Gholvad and Bordi; finally ending in Mumbai.

FEZANA has been a supporter of the program since its inception in 2013 as have many local associations like ZAGNY, ZAPANJ and ZSO.

On this trip, the participants convened in New Delhi and had an opportunity to visit the Delhi Dar e Mehr, the Aramgah, Sethna Farms and the newly opened Sodawaterbottleopenerwala Café.

In Pune, visits included a stop at the Della Resorts in Lonavala owned by Jimmy Mistry. The Tata Central Archives welcomed the Fellows for a rare behind the scenes tour of the actual archive area. Cyrus Poonawalla’s Serum Institute of India and the Poonawalla Stud Farms were also on the itinerary.

In Mumbai, the Fellows got an opportunity to experience the wealth of Parsi experience. This included a detailed tour of the Doongerwadi with Khojeste Mistree; a talk at the Bombay House, headquarters of the Tata business empire, meeting the patients at the seminal Parsee General Hospital; learning about crafts and arts at the Ratan Tata Institute and many such other experiences. A full on culinary experience awaited the Fellows during the entire trip and the Mumbai leg had its pit stops at Britannia, Jimmy Boy’s, RTI, and Bombay Gymkhana among other places.

After Mumbai, the scene moved to four days in South Gujarat which is usually the most transformative experience for the Fellows as was seen in the first trip, and it continued to be the same on this one.

Standing on the banks of the Varoli river in Nargol; which was possibly one of the first landing spots for boats carrying Zarathushtis fleeing Iran was a truly poignant moment.

Visiting the ancient Dakhma in Sanjan with Rukshana Nanji, a leading archeologist in India and the one who spearheaded the project in Sanjan a decade ago; gave the Fellows a sense of how far back Zoroastrian roots go in the Indian Sub-Continent.

Further along in Gujarat, the Meherji Rana Library offered the amazing opportunity to interact with Dr. Ervad Kotwal, the legendary Parsi scholar priest who patiently answered the myriad queries that the Fellows had, while also talking about his life and work.

Visits to the 800 year old Vadi Dar e Mehr and the J.N. Tata House and the Jamsetjee Jeejeebhoy home were some of the highlights of Navsari. The Fellows also got an opportunity to see a Kusti making demonstration and try their hand at it, at Jamshed Baug in Navsari.

Bharuch offered them a view of the old Parsi settlement on the banks of the great Narmada river. It also allowed us to see some of the old homes and a very old
“tankā” system of water harvesting and storage that is still in use and active today.

In Surat the amazing hospitality of the Dotiwala family gave us an opportunity to have a back-of-house tour of the bakery and indulge in all the amazing goodies they bake. Cyrus Dotiwala told us about the history of the Batasa biscuit which was invented at the Dotiwala Bakery a couple of centuries ago.

In Dahanu, Gholvad and Bordi; the Fellows got a chance to meet with Iranian Zarathusti farmers who have settled there for generations. They also got a chance to see the famed Bordi beach and a Chikoo auction.

At the end of the 13 days, the participants left wanting more of the experience. For all of them, it wouldn't be wrong to say that it was a transformative life experience. It brought them an understanding of the Parsi Zarathushti roots in India and exposed them to a lot of experts, businesses and a whole cultural experience that will remain with them for a lifetime.

Future trips are planned to Iran and India.

If you would like to know more about the program visit www.zororoots.org to get involved.

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**FEZANA Annual General Meeting Notice**

Hosted by the Zoroastrian Association of Pennsylvania and New Jersey (ZAPANJ), FEZANA is pleased to announce that the 2015 FEZANA Annual General Meeting (AGM) will be held in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. Details have been circulated to local FEZANA representatives. Please contact the FEZANA Administrative office if you have not received the full announcement or, to view details on FEZANA website [click here](http://www.fires-fezana.org/).

**Pre-AGM Session:** May 1, 2015 (2:00-6:00 pm)
**AGM Meetings:** May 2-3, 2015 (SAT: 8:00am-6:00pm / SUN 8:00am-1:00pm)

**AGM Venue and Hotel Accommodation:**
Crowne Plaza Philadelphia
260 Mall Boulevard, King of Prussia, PA 19406;
610-265-7500

**Reservation link:**
CrownePlazaHotel_FEZANA_AGM@Philadelphia_May1_2015

**Important:** Please book your hotel soon. The group rate (mention “ZAPANJ”) is only available for reservations that are made by April 1, 2015.

Please RSVP with the number of people attending in your party to: Saghari Javanshir (sjbehroozi@verizon.net) and Zenobia Damania (admin@fezana.org)

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Please note: Committee Reports and Member Association Reports are due April 10, 2015
Gahambars are seasonal festivals of special significance to the Zoroastrians and occur six times in a year. Each Gahambar spans 5 days and the Avesta refers to them as agricultural festivals but the later writings connect them to cosmogony.

The word Gahambar, Gasanbar in Pahlavi, has been linked to the word Yairya in the Avesta. The Avestan word Yare means year and Yairya means seasonal divisions of the year [1].

The first Gahambar is called Maidyoizarem and is celebrated from the 41st to 45th day after Navroz, which occurs on the day of Spring Equinox, March 21. Its name signifies Midspring, as maidhya means middle and zaremya means spring.

The second Gahambar occurs from 101th to 105th day and is called Maidhyoshem meaning Midsummer, as shem means summer.

The third Gahambar occurs in early fall from 176th to 180th day and is called Paitishhayem. The word comes from the terms paiti and hahya (corn) and means bringing in the harvest.

The fourth Gahambar occurs in the fall from 206th to 210th day and is called Ayathrem. This time of the year is usually linked with the breeding season of the cattle.

The fifth Gahambar occurs in mid-winter from 286th to 290th day and is called Maidhyarem, which means “midst of rest” because during winter agricultural work generally stops.

The sixth Gahambar occurs from 361th to 365th day and is called Hamaspathmadae. Hama means same, pathan means path and madha means middle so it signifies the time of the year when day and night are equal.

A prayer called Afrin of Gahambar links the seasonal festivals with six principal creations of Ahura Mazda: Sky, Water, Earth, Plants, Animals and Humans. The primary object of the Gahambars was to thank Ahura Mazda for the different seasons as the prosperity of the world depended on it. Later on the object of thanking Ahura Mazda for the six creations mentioned above was added.

On the last day of each Gahambar there is a solemn feast where members of a family or residents of a town assemble to eat and share food communally. The members volunteer to donate their time and money, prepare the food and serve the meals without regard to status. During the meal, Zoroastrians from all walks of life sit together, and the equal sharing of food with everyone serves to help build and strengthen the community. Universal Brotherhood was one of the

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**CONNECTIONS**

Haft Seen Table, Persian Parade, San Jose, California

Chicago Zoroastrians marched in the Chicago Nowruz Parade last month

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**A Look at Gahambars**

By Erv. Soli Bamji

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The Liturgies usually performed on the Gahambar days are: Afringan of Gahambar; Baj of Gahambar; and Yasna of Gahamber, also known as the Visperad

The Achaemenians are known to have celebrated the Gahambars which were linked to Ahura Mazda’s creations and the Amesha Spentas, the guardians of these creations. Each Gahambar was celebrated in honour of one of the creations:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gahambar</th>
<th>Creation</th>
<th>Amesha Spenta</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maidyoizarem</td>
<td>Sky</td>
<td>Khshathra Vairya (Sovereign Kingdom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidhyoshem</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>Haurvatat (Perfection)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paitishhayem</td>
<td>Earth</td>
<td>Spenta Armaiti (Holy Devotion)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayathrem</td>
<td>Plants</td>
<td>Ameratat (Immortality)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maidhyarem</td>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>Vohu Manah (Good Mind)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamaspathmadae</td>
<td>Humans</td>
<td>Spenta Mainyu (Bounteous Spirit)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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principal objects aimed at in the public Gahambars, where King and common
person, the rich and the poor, the strong and the weak together shared a
common meal.

The Gahambars are considered to be the principal occasions for ceremonial
gatherings. The Afrinhah of Gahambars mentions that it is the duty of a
Zoroastrian to celebrate and participate in a Gahambar. The four words used in
the Afrin are: Yazad, sazad, khurad, dehad (Pray, perform, eat, give)

These words suggest the different ways every Zoroastrian can participate in
celebrating the Gahambars. The seasonal festival reminds the Zoroastrians of
their roots and the good deeds, such as radih (charity) and ratish (being truthful),
they must perform in life.

References
Institute, Mumbai, India, 1963.

[Reprinted with permission of Env. Soli Bamji http://www3.sympatico.ca/zoroastrian/]

Message from UN Secretary-General on
International Day of Nowruz - March 21

[International Nowruz Day was proclaimed by the United Nations General
Assembly, in its resolution A/RES/64/253 of 2010, at the initiative of several
countries that share this holiday.]

Following is UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s message for the International
Day of Nowruz, observed on March 21:

The annual observance of Nowruz is a wonderful opportunity for people to join
together to celebrate cultural diversity, dialogue and mutual respect. It is a
moment of unity and solidarity, within and among societies, that is all the more
important at times of strife and division.

This year’s Nowruz also takes on special meaning as the United Nations works
to shape a new vision for sustainable future and adopt a meaningful universal
climate agreement. These priorities for 2015 are in line with the spirit of Nowruz,
which promotes harmony with nature and all peoples to foster cooperation for
lasting peace.

This ancient New Year tradition coincides with the arrival of spring, giving rise to
a rich array of customs, rituals and festivities, from communities in Western,
Central and Southern Asia, to the Caucasus, Balkans and other regions.
Nowruz is inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural
Heritage of Humanity, under United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization’s (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible
Cultural Heritage.

I wish joyous and peaceful celebrations to all. May the spirit of Nowruz live on
throughout the year.

— U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon

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