

Minutes

Annual General Meeting held on Saturday 26th March 2011.

Starting Time – 6.50 pm
Members Present – 42

Apology – Dr Phani Pal, Dr Manab De Munshi, Dr & Mrs S Chakraborty, Dr & Mrs T Sengupta, Dr & Mrs Sanjay Addy, Dr & Drs K Dutt .

Before starting with the agenda of the meeting, President Mr S. De said that the E.C. has decided to record the proceedings of the meeting to deter any rowdy or unsocial behaviour. He requested everybody to stand in silence for 1 minute to pay respect and pray for the departed souls of our 3 members – Mr R.K. Basu, Mrs Gopa Bose & Mrs Debaki Majumder.

The actual proceedings of the meeting then started.

Mr S.De read minutes of the last meeting. He requested everybody to keep the copy of the AGM minutes, which will be posted to them after the meeting.

Matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting – None.

Minutes were accepted as correct and adopted.

President's Report.

Mr. S. De started by thanking all the general members and executive members in particular, for helping him throughout the year to carry out his duties.

This year the basement was cleared, painted and provided with electric lights. The sound system and the hall & stage lights were also re organised. Mr De thanked P K Das, S R Das & S K Ghosh for achieving these at a minimum possible cost by providing their own labour. They also worked hard along with other members of the Puja shopping team and saved money by buying mostly from the wholesale market. Even though the expenses are ever increasing due to inflation our Association has a healthy balance due to careful spending plan, prudent investments of the surplus fund, generous & kind donations for Puja and other sponsorships, revenue from Magazine advertisements, income from Senior Citizens club & Friday club and hall hire income.

He also thanked Arati Pal for organising tax refund from HMRC.

Mr De thanked

- 1) Stage decoration team (Manik, Suddhosil, Tapas and others including lots of enthusiastic ladies) for Puja, Mahalaya, Dance drama, Drama on Akadasi etc.
- 2) Ujjal for his hard work and unlimited enthusiasm which made drama on Akadasi possible.
- 3) Manab De Munshi for organising musical evening on Mahalaya and for proposing & sponsoring Ganesh Puja
- 4) P K Das for proposing and sponsoring Kartik Puja

- 5) Rekha Sarkar and team for puja arrangements
- 6) Purohits Dr K Chakraborty and Mr R.K. Ganguly
- 7) Team responsible for cooking during Pujas lead by Arati Pal & Niva Choudhury

S. De congratulated Arup Choudhury for organising and presenting varied and enjoyable cultural functions throughout the year and also editing the magazine Agomoni & raising advertisements for it almost single-handed.

Finally he thanked Lord Kumar Bhattacharya for delivering a superb talk on 15th August and inaugurating the Puja Utsav. His kind and generous donation for Puja and donation of a plasma television to the association was greatly appreciated. Mr De mentioned that Lord Bhattacharya rang him after the Puja to congratulate for a successful Puja. S De said that the credit goes to a team of large number of dedicated members.

Purchase of adjacent land –

Amount collected up to 23.03.11 stands at £42,089.50. He thanked those members and friends who donated so generously. We need another £5000-£7000 to fence the perimeter of the land.

Planning permission for extension was obtained on 23rd June 2010 and the land was registered on 13th December 2010. Ujjal was congratulated for his wide contacts, skill of negotiation and time he spent for getting the planning permission and acquiring the land. Last year this time some people doubted whether this would be ever achieved but they were wrong and we have done it. Hopefully the land will be surveyed and demarcated in a couple of week's time and then it will be fenced. Ujjal will show the plan by power projection.

President informed that a regulatory compliance investigation by the Charity Commission was triggered following a complaint by a relative of Mr S R Das. The Commission has asked us to have policies on the following: -

- 1) Safeguarding
- 2) CRB checks & disclosures
- 3) Reporting serious incidents, and
- 4) Risk management.

We are fully co operating with the Charity Commission and working hard to fulfil these requirements by next 6-8 weeks with the help of a solicitor who has considerable experience in this field.

S.De then announced with pleasure that our amended constitution vetted & approved by the Charity Commission was approved and adopted unanimously by the members present in the SGM held on 12th March 2011.

S. De said that in the last development committee meeting they had a very fruitful discussion about raising funds. One idea was to charge a membership fee of £25 per person instead of family membership of £30. This will enable us to show banks our fixed earning to be adequate to borrow money at a lower rate for our extension.

Ujjal Ghosh then power projected the following sanctioned plan for our extension
Ground floor layout – Downstairs hall will be twice as large. Stage will go back by 5ft & extend on each side by 2ft.

First floor layout – 3 activity rooms with movable dividers, which are changeable to one or two rooms. Stairs and main entrance will be in the corner of the right hand side of the present stage.

He showed the Cuthbert Road elevation, Heath Street elevation, School side elevation and Winson Green side showing the main entrance.

Biman asked about the car park. Ujjal said that there will be parking provision for about 10 cars and we can use the council car park across the road.

Mr S De said that we should finish the regulatory compliance investigation first and then go for external fund raising. We need to prepare an attractive brochure and perhaps change our logo before going for external fund raising. Ujjal explained that although our logo is good with Swastika sign etc but needs to be modernised, might be using colour or some other way. Madhu De said that it was not a Swastika sign but Puttalika. S De said that we asked our priest for a Sanskrit writing on our logo. There was a vote on change of logo and it was accepted by majority vote that the logo should be modified and not changed. Mamata Das said that E.C should ask for suggestions from members about the modification and then decide. It was agreed that 4 weeks time will be given to members for their suggestions.

Mr Amal Biswas suggested that we should post some sign of Hindu Religion on our building and it was agreed that an 'Om' sign will be put in the front of the building.

S.De said that Ujjal can arrange loan from Bank but we will have to pay interest of about £3500/- to £4000/-. For that we need to increase the membership fees as explained already. Proposed increase of membership, if accepted, will be effective from 1st January 2012.

S. De asked if anybody was against this increase of membership fees. 9 members put their hands up. Ratna De commented that this decision should not be based on such a small gathering. S De agreed to contact other members as well before coming to a decision.

Mr B P Das asked how we are going to repay the capital. Gouri De Munshi asked what collateral is needed for this bank loan. Ujjal at first said that no collateral is needed and then said well, our building is there. Gouri De Munshi said it would be a big risk.

General Secretary's report

Arati Pal provided details of the activities of the year-

- 1) Bengali New Year celebration and food tasting, which was a great success.
- 2) Rabindra Jayanti celebration was thoroughly enjoyed by everybody and some of the members worked very hard to produce such a high quality programme.
- 3) BBQ Evening- Its popularity is ever increasing.
- 4) Day trip was arranged to visit Wembley temple in London. It is a beautiful temple with wonderful architecture.
- 5) Puja Festival- Arati mentioned that this year we started Ganesh Puja & Kartik Puja. For proposing and sponsoring these two pujas she thanked Dr & Mrs M De Munshi and P K Das respectively. Hopefully we will be able to continue this every year.

Arati said that the EC is grateful to every member for his or her hard work during the Puja festival. She thanked Purbasha Dutta and Manju Ray who as Puja committee members helped with all the arrangements. She also thanked Rekha Sarkar and team for excellent Puja arrangements, the two priests for performing pujas, members who worked tirelessly in the kitchen, on the stage, doing puja shopping and so on. Thanks to everyone who sponsored Puja & Food and who donated generously during the Puja. She welcomed any suggestion from members to improve such big occasions.

Saraswati Puja was well organised by Mr & Mrs B N Sarkar with help from lots of dedicated members.

Doljatra was held as usual. It is very popular amongst our younger members.

Senior Citizens' club is running smoothly. Friday evening activities are not currently running because of harsh winter, hopefully it will start soon.

Finally she mentioned that New year celebration and food tasting would be held this year on Saturday 16th April 2011. As usual members are requested to prepare their best dishes and attend in large number to make it a success.

Treasurer's Report

S. De mentioned that Mr Ghosh had a road accident in November 2010 in India and still is not very well, but managed to prepare the Annual accounts. Dr Adak wished him speedy recovery. Report is then read by the Treasurer.

Mr Ghosh requested the members who have not yet paid their membership fees for year ending 31st Jan 2011, to do so by May 2011. He requested not to pay membership fees with other donations in the same cheque because it causes confusion. He then presented the accounts of the year using a power projector.

S Bhattacharya said that Mr De and Mr Ghosh are not independent examiners, but they have signed the Accounts. S De answered that as per our new constitution President and Treasurer should sign. No other question was raised about the accounts.

Cultural Secretary's Report

Arup Choudhury said that Puja Utsab and some other functions have already been reported in the President & Gen Secretary's report. We had a wonderful time and particularly during Puja. Star Ananda recorded our Puja on Nabami and broadcast in India in which he was interviewed. Special thanks to Ujjal for that.

We had recital from Himangshu Goswami on Mahalaya, thanks to Manab & Gouri Demunshi for their help.

Manoj Mitra and his team performed on Akadasi and this was a treat.

Atreyee and her team performed on Bijoya Sammilani the dance drama Shyama, thanks to her and the troupe for the excellent performance.

Agomoni was published on time and came out very well after a real struggle. A Choudhury thanked everybody for his or her help.

AOB

1) Ujjal said that it was very generous of Mr S De to present a Power Projector to the association costing £578/- and asked the members to show appreciation by clapping.

2) Nababarsha - Arati Pal said that there would be Food tasting first, then variety performance between 4-6 pm and finally Dinner. After the meeting she will go round with the list of food to choose from.

3) When the Christmas Party was cancelled proper notification was not given and as a result 2 members came all the way from Wolverhampton and found the doors closed. So from now on such cancellations will be posted in our Website in due time.

4) S De requested the members to give him a mandate to do the following 3 things –

- i) Elect an Advisory Board
- ii) Elect assistant Social & Cultural Secretary
- iii) Revalidate the position of Election Commissioner.

There was no objection.

This concludes the meeting. Meeting finishes at 8.30 pm.

The minutes have been recorded and duly signed by Mrs Gouri De Munshi, Vice President, Bengali Association Midlands.

*G. De Munshi
Vice President,
Bengali Association Midlands.*