



BME Network Chairman Kuldip Rupra in discussion with Board Member Sam Budu.

Welcome to this publication of the BMEN Newsletter which is just one of the mechanisms for communication with our partners and member organisations. It is the BMEN's mission to ensure that our members, the BME community organisations, are well informed to be able to benefit from local and national initiatives, through working closely with all relevant funders and policy makers.

We have benefited from

New BMEN (East) Board presents its first newsletter

continuous help through difficult times during the last few months from organisations like COVER, GoEast, Cambridge City Council, Race Equality Councils of the region and the National BME Networks and CECF.

Contributions from experienced members have been instrumental in meeting the requirements of the ACU to secure our Annual Grant. Recent discussions with EEDA have also helped the board to focus on well-published needs of the regional and sub regional BME communities and exploring opportunities for participation in the regional economic strategy.

This newsletter will provide opportunities for

all stakeholders to comment on relevant issues in the public arena, provide regular reminders of our obligations and help BMEN East to maintain a focus on its Action Plan. We are in the process of developing a website which will complement the newsletter and provide information on regional and national issues.

We are now able to recruit full time staff - a Coordinator and an Administrator/Support Officer by October 2002. In the meantime we are ably assisted by Liesbeth ten Ham, who, has provided tremendous initiative in helping to develop the network. Our sub-committees, the Financial and General Purposes Sub-Committee

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The arts and racism

Does institutional racism extend to the arts? The team at Eastern Touring Agency's Diversity Programme think so and so they are working hard to ensure that theatres, galleries and other arts venues reflect the culturally diverse population of the region. The Project, which started in 1999, offers

practical support and assistance to new and upcoming artists from Black, Asian and Chinese background as part of its remit to increase the representation of ethnic minority art, from all disciplines, in "mainstream" venues. It concentrates on six towns: Peterborough,

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Deadline next issue: 1st October 2002.
 Please send your events, comments, ideas, suggestions and information to Liesbeth ten Ham for inclusion in the newsletter.

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(Chaired by Maheeb Ladha), the Personnel Sub-Committee (Chaired by Myrna Knights) and the Policy and Strategy Sub-Committee have assisted the Board in making core decisions within a very short space of time.

Hopefully strengths and weaknesses in our procedures and practices will be further identified during our Away Day on the 29th July.

Finally, I would like to express my thanks to the interim board and volunteer members who have been working tirelessly in the last few months for the BMEN.

Kuldip Rupra
Chairman BMEN

BlackHOUSING

is the only 'national' black and minority ethnic (BME) race and housing magazine. It is published six times a year by the Federation of Black Housing organisations and intends to link BME communities to policy makers. If you would like to receive a free introductory issue, please call 020 8533 7053 or e-mail blackHOUSING@fbho.co.uk

The arts ... Continued from page 1

Ipswich, Cambridge, Bedford, Watford and Luton.

"We hope to break down the barriers which contribute to Eurocentric programming in arts venues," Says Diversity Programme Manager, Pauline Catlin-Reid. "Although the UK is one of the most multi-cultural countries in Europe the plays, exhibitions and musical events that are featured in local venues largely focus on western traditions and references. The reasons for the current lack of diversity relate to wider issues of society but can arise from a mainstream venue's unfamiliarity with minority ethnic art forms or because new and emerging companies lack confidence and experience when approaching venues"

The Diversity Programme has had much success in assisting local companies realise their professional ambitions. Recently, for example the DP facilitated Performance II's, (African Caribbean dance and drama company) tour of three venues. The project has also helped Oysageyfo, (Ghanaian music and dance) to execute a school's



Project officer Robert Nugent at one of DP's local forums that bring promoters and artists together.

education project and make a successful funding application.

"We are not a funding organisation but we do offer extensive experience, a wealth of relevant contacts and are committed to seeing the professional and artistic development of our participants" says Pauline Catlin Reid.

If you would like more information on how the Diversity Programme could help you, as an artist or as a promoter, please contact Patricia Lashley on 01223 500202. Further information about Performance II's production is available from www.ashe4.com

CRE's Annual 2001 Report

After one of the most challenging years for race relations in recent British history, CRE Chairman Gurbux Singh said on Tuesday 2 July that the events of 2001 highlighted the importance of the public sector's new duty to promote race equality.

On the day the CRE's annual report for 2001 was published he said: "Few could have foreseen some of the events that took place in Britain and elsewhere in 2001 - the most serious riots we have seen on these shores in recent years; and the horrific attacks in New York and Washington on 11 September. Many British ethnic minority communities, and British Muslims in particular have borne the backlash since then."

However, commenting on new legislation to promote racial equality, Gurbux Singh pointed to a brighter future.

"The amended Race Relations Act gives some 40,000 public bodies a new, enforceable, statutory duty to promote racial equality and good race relations. This marks the biggest change in race relations laws in 25 years and will lay the foundations for a determined drive across the public sector to deliver racial equality and social justice."

The CRE's annual report outlines the work of the CRE against the key corporate objectives the Commission set for the year 2001-2002. It is available from www.cre.gov.uk or tel. 0870 240 3697.

Grant opportunities for projects using volunteers

Age Concern England is a national agent for the Department of Health's Opportunities for Volunteering Scheme. Voluntary sector organisations can apply for grants of up to £20,000 p.a. to establish and develop projects which add value to the provision of health and social care by using volunteers, particularly those who are unemployed or disadvantaged. Full details and application form for 2003/4 grants are available from The Grants Unit, Age Concern England, Astral House, 1268 London Road, LONDON SW16 4ER; tel. 020 87657738 or Fax 020 86799154.

The closing date for 2003/4 applications is 9 October 2002.

Members' Spotlight: Sangam

A guided tour of the House of Commons, an Indian Classical Concert, Holi celebrations, processions, computer classes and, coming up, Peterborough's first Mela, are part of the inexhaustible list of social and cultural events that were initiated and organised by Sangam, an Indian Women's group in Peterborough which was founded in 1997.

Out of all these dance seems to be Sangam's theme. At many public events in Peterborough they have performed dance demonstrations, and currently an Awards for All grant and the Peterborough City Council help to pay for weekly dance classes which are in great demand. "Dancing has given us a profile and brought us out into the community", tells Jayshree Mehta, Secretary of Sangam. Swapna Mazumdar, Sangam's chair proudly explains that one of their members has become an excellent choreographer and that at the last event the girls were dancing like professionals. "Everybody here puts in what they can contribute," she continues, "And every single person has done something for the women's group."

Three major problems had to be overcome

Things have not always been easy though. There were three major problems that they had to overcome when they first started.

The first problem consisted of a constitution and everything that involves running a group officially. The Peterborough City Council wanted to support their Golden Jubilee Celebrations of the Indian Independence in

1997, but Sangam had to be an official body in order to be able to receive this support. "Within weeks we were established", tells Jayshree, but the more difficult thing still had to come after finishing the paper work. How do you run meetings? What are the tasks and duties of the board members?

"We had to do courses on procedures and best practise", explains Jayshree.

Funding was the second problem. Today they receive £300 annually from the City Council, which just about pays for their room rental in the Peterborough Women's Centre and postage. In 1998 though, it was prize money that paid for the running costs. A panel of five members participated in Q Asia, a BBC gameshow, and they won. Sangam did not only gain necessary funding, but also the confidence that they would succeed, which was very needed at the time.

"They did not want us to start this group"

"We received a lot of negative feedback from the Indian community", tells Swapna. "They did not want us to start this group and put in hurdles everywhere we went. If we were organising an event, they would organise one too at the same time." But they persevered because they felt that the women did not have the same chance in the wider group. "Sangam does bring out the best of the woman very effectively", states Swapna proudly, and the message she wants to pass on to other



Dancing has given Sangam a profile in the mainstream community.

women's group is "Carry on, even if there are only three people attending your meeting. They will see you succeed."

Today this issue is a matter of the past, and together with five other (Indian) community groups they are working extremely hard to make the first Peterborough Anand Mela (19 – 21st July, see page 4) a wonderful event for all residents of Peterborough and beyond.

Discussing racism and the Kama Sutra

After the Mela they will think of new events to organise for their own thirty members and the Indian and mainstream community. And their get-togethers will of course continue; discussing racism and the Kama Sutra and supporting each other. They have received funding to start Indian classical instrument classes, and a course for social workers on cultural sensitive women's issues, and they are thinking about creating a new website.

For further information about Sangam, please contact Jayshree Mehta on 01733 562627 or by e-mail on Jayshree_Mehta@lineone.net.

Or come and see them dance at the Mela!
(Lth)

peterborough anand mela

Peterborough Anand (joyous or happy) Mela (fete or gala) is to be held on **19th, 20th and 21st July 2002**, at The Embankment Walk, Peterborough.

This will be the first time ever that an Indian arts and culture celebration of this type is organised in the East of England (see page 3). However the best part of this Mela is that it will be hands on participation, for example, participate in a dance, sari, rangoli or henna workshop.

Come and enjoy the Mela. Friday and Saturday from noon to late, with live concerts from 7.30pm and a firework display on Friday. On both days there are numerous food and other stalls as well as workshops and demonstrations.

On Sunday there are lots of activities like Cricket and other games and sports of India.

A full programme is available from

www.peterboroughmela.tk

Or call 01733 562627 for further information.

I would like to introduce myself. My name is **Kai Yin Low**. This is my first month in post as the 'new' Community Race Development Officer for the **Norwich and Norfolk Racial Equality Council**, a post previously held by Abraham Eshetu. I have lived in Norwich since 1988, and prior to this, I lived in Malaysia, Australia and Germany. Here I am:



Already I am asking myself, how I can work together with and support local communities to promote good community relations, to celebrate diversity and to raise awareness about anti racism, so that in partnership we can work towards creating a community that is cohesive, considerate and free of racial prejudice. How vital your voice is in achieving this. We all have knowledge, expertise, and unique experiences to share.

As Community Race Development Officer my main responsibilities will be:

- Taking forward the community empowerment, development and social cohesion sections of the NNREC work programme.
- Facilitating and supporting

minority ethnic communities towards celebrating diversity through the social inclusion, community cohesion agenda and an increased active participation at all social and economic levels, in the city of Norwich, throughout the County of Norfolk, regionally and nationally.

- Assisting and supporting a social inclusion and community cohesion approach, which encourages the celebration of diversity, raising awareness of anti racist policy and practice to promote good race relations between all racial groups.
- Working with link officers who have community development remits, particularly working with young people.

Watch this space for information on future events like the Artmiles mural project!

George Jones, a former police officer, has started as the part-time officer from the **Cambridge Racial Incidents Support Project (CRISP)**. He will be working in partnership with the Cambridge City Council and the Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum, where his office is based. CRISP aims to challenge racial harassment and provide support and assistance to those suffering racial harassment. For further information please ring 01223 462615 or 07970 868168 (helpline).

**International
equalities
funday
Summer 2003**

Urban Forum workers Caroline Bond and Rupa Sarkar are working with other partners to stage a large scale international event in a London park next summer. The funday will celebrate diversity and is expected to attract more than 10,000 people. Expressions of interest of all/ any kinds are sought. Any organisations or individual wishing to respond, please contact Rupa at d_engery@hotmail.com or 07971 089126.