

Obituary of Marhum Ahmed Mohamedhusein Dungersi

A Visionary with unparalleled loyalty to community service

Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Rajeoon



It is with great sorrow that Alhaj Ahmed Dungersi passed away on Tuesday, 18 April 2023, 27 Ramadhan 1444; on the day of Khatmul Quran (At Hujjat), which was always a special day in his calendar.

Ahmedbhai was born in 1938 in the district of Hurumzi, Zanzibar to Mohamedhusein Ali Dungersi and Fatma Ali Gulamhusein. He had seven Siblings; Marhum Gulamali Dungersi, Marhuma Kaniz Musa, Marhuma Rubab Champsy, Marhum Muslim Dungersi, Gulshan Kassam, Raza Dungersi and Batul Dewji.

He finished his education at the island's famous Government Boys Secondary School and completed his O-Levels in 1957. Like any other youth, Ahmedbhai participated in sports, and excelled in athletics and was selected as his school's representative in the inter-school tournaments in Zanzibar, where he broke records for the 100m and 200m tracks.

His organisation and leadership skills were sharpened from his school days as a Scout Master. His interest in sports and his strength in administrative skills made him a perfect candidate for the post of the Secretary of the Zanzibar Ithna-asheri Gymkhana, a post he served over several years. He was active on the

national scene and became the President of the Zanzibar Muslim Student Association.

He had a varied, accomplished and gratified working life, which started off as a Health Worker with the World Health Organisation, moving on to a position of Chief Cashier for the Zanzibar Electricity Board. Like many others, the revolution in 1964, forced his first migration to mainland Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania.

In Dar Es Salaam, he was the Accountant for Kearsley's Travel Agents for seven years, before they posted him to London in 1971. He moved here to manage their UK branch. After many years as an employee, Ahmedbhai went into business, first owning a chain of bakeries in London, followed by dealing in wholesale trading of second-hand clothing in Leicester. Ahmedbhai retired from an active working life in 2003.

As for his communal contributions, it seems Ahmedbhai was born with an inbuilt enthusiasm to volunteer his services to the community, from his early days to the day when he was called back to his Lord. He served in various capacities, starting as an Honorary Secretary of the Hujjat Jamat (Nai-masjid) in Zanzibar from 1961 to 1964, when he also represented them as a Councillor to Africa Federation. During this time, he also took additional positions as the Honorary Secretary and Trustee of the community institutions of Datu Hemani Girl's primary school, Haji Nasser Nurmohamed's Dispensary and Datu Hemani Maternity Clinic.

In 1983, he was the Honorary Secretary of the Interim Committee of the then London Jamaat, with a combined constitutional membership from both North and South London, when the community used to meet in Hammersmith (London, UK). It was the era of

monumental, and everlasting changes to come. Ahmedbhai was part of the dual nucleus of the leadership with Mustafa Chandoo, carrying the community into purchasing and refurbishing the Stanmore centre into what it is today. Many still recall the eventful era, and at times, many challenging moments. The community is forever indebted to this dual team for their selfless sacrifices in steering the community through its inception and infancy. The support of Marhum Mulla Asgher was equally instrumental to the fruition of this project.

Ahmedbhai remained the Honorary Secretary of London Jamaat for six years. During his term, the BUJUs' formalised were the Shia Ithna-asheri Madressa, Huijat Saturday Workshop, Montessori Nursery School, Daily Quran Classes and Annexe Activities. He ensured the continuity of the revived bi-monthly Newsletter, and actively encouraged and facilitated youngsters' recitation in the main hall.

After a break from public office, he returned four years on, in 1993, as the President of London Jamaat, with a clear set of objectives to accomplish, which were achieved: to repay the members' loans, setup the News of Death Network, cataloguing the graves of the community, setting up a structured strong secretariat within the executive and formalising the main subcommittees into BUJUs'.

Ahmedbhai was also one of the founding members of The Council of European Jamaats (CoEJ), and throughout its existence, he has consistently, wholeheartedly and enthusiastically, supported its evolution, ideals and services. For a full two terms, he served as its President.

Ahmedbhai regularly attended The World Federation meetings, either due to his constitutional post or as an invitee. He was appointed by The World Federation to be its Liaison Link to CoEJ prior to CoEJ becoming a fully-fledged member of The World Federation.

The European Hajj Mission (EHM) was initially set up under London Jamaat, before formally becoming a subcommittee under CoEJ in 1988. EHM has become world renowned for its efficient, humane and pilgrim-oriented services; a reputation built from years of experience and hard work of a dedicated team of volunteers. Ahmedbhai, as one of its founding members, led the group and was the Chairman for 26 years. He took a break from chairmanship for 3 years but was still the group leader. Ahmedbhai successfully led 30 missions under the auspices of the EHM, serving over 2,500 hujjaj, with his last mission in 2016.

On a personal note, Ahmedbhai had to have a heart bypass surgery in 1999. Well-intentioned family and friends cautioned him on the hazards and stress levels involved in leading the EHM Hajj trip that year. However, his team would have nothing of it, and with full faith in Allah (SWT) and Ahmedbhai's desire to serve Hujjaj, he did not miss the trip, and in fact, performed tawaaf in a wheelchair. This is testament to the dedication and loyalty he inspires from his team! Murtaza Dato, the Chief Administrator of the EHM, was heard commenting, "all it needs is the supplication of one pilgrim, who had benefited from the EHM under Ahmedbhai to be heard, for a speedy and complete recovery from his operation". By the Grace of Allah, Ahmedbhai made a full recovery, and continued serve the community until his last breath.

Ahmedbhai had also represented the World Federation at the British Foreign Office Hajj Delegation Group. With so many processes, bureaucracy and local conditions constantly changing, Ahmedbhai through his decisive nature and excellent relationships with the local authorities on the ground, always managed to provide a memorable service for Hujjaj year after year.

One of Ahmedbhai's key passions was the Ramadhan Darsa Programme. He was instrumental in setting this up, and leading it for many years. During COVID, the Darsa programmes were run online with excellent participation to the extent that after COVID this became institutionalised and online Darsa continues to be run outside of Ramadhan every Wednesday evening. Ahmedbhai continued to attend Darsa even as his health deteriorated and kept up his love for the Quran and communal recitation.

Ahmedbhai was a regular attendee and strong supporter of the weekly seniors programme which he initiated during his tenure as President of KSIMC of London. During the Stanmore fund-raising visits to donors, the concept of facilitating the needs of Seniors as part of the project was an attractive one to many donors. This was especially so for donors from East Africa, who perhaps could relate directly to the problems being faced by the elders in the West. The aim was to provide a day within the week when the centre was made available to the Seniors. At the very least, the programme set out to bring the seniors together in a social environment, allow them to pray together and share a meal – which was a commendable start. This was highly appreciated by the Seniors, bearing in mind, many perhaps were lacking companionship of their peers, and a common meeting place was most welcome. During his two terms of leadership at CoEJ, the advice and consultation of the Seniors was greatly valued, and to this end, a permanent seat was reserved at all CoEJ meetings for a representative from the Seniors.

He is survived by his wife Fatma Bai, daughter Femina, son Akber and grandchildren Malikah, Zainab and Yasmin.

The loss of Ahmedbhai has not only been felt by the Hujjat community, but globally. Although he will be sorely missed, his legacy will live on through his foresight, and determination the fruits of which we are all enjoying today.