



Top: Prince Mohammed bin Nawaf addressing the British media at British Hajj Exhibition

Bottom Left: Saudi Ambassador Prince Mohammed along with members of KAA Public Library

bridge of Jamarat and the Monorail and the Haramain Mashair and then he also mentioned about the Kiswa of Ka'aba and Zam Zam water project.

Dr. Ahmed al-Dubayan, Director General of the Islamic Cultural Centre, London, also spoke on the website of this Hajj Exhibition. This website will be opened tomorrow, Thursday, 26th of January 2012 with the inauguration of the British Museum Hajj Exhibition. General public can visit the website. The British Museum Hajj Exhibition will be opened from 26 January to 15 April, 2012.

After the speeches, there were Questions & Answers session when members of the press, both Muslim and non-Muslim media, asked questions mostly and mainly about the new development, the cost of the new development, the accommodation of pilgrims in Makkah and the holy sites and the increasing numbers of pilgrims and so on and so forth.

Media Conference at British Museum

Today, Wednesday, the 25th of January, the British Museum holds another media conference. His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed addressed the event. His Excellency Faisal bin

Muammar the General Supervisor of the King Abdul Aziz Public Library was also present at the event to answer questions regarding the contribution of Saudi Arabia or the Library as a coordinator of the Saudi institution with the British Museum."

Interview Dr Ahmad Turkistani

Dr. Ahmad ibn Saifuddin Turkistani mentioned, "The King Abdul Aziz Public Library has contributed actually 51 pieces of artifacts and objects to be shown in the exhibition. Of course, there will be wider picture of the exhibition but you can never understand the past or appreciate the present unless you go to the past and follow the trace and the trail of the Hajj throughout the ages until today."

"There is some richness and lot of things in there at the Exhibition to see and to enjoy and to read and to bring back from history what took place in the past and actually this is important to make people aware," mentioned Dr. Turkistani.

Dr. Turkistani also emphasized on the importance of the Exhibition. He said, "Obviously you can see the importance of this event for the Muslim community here in Britain and for the British community at large where we need people to get better understanding of what Hajj is all about, what Islam is all about and obviously Hajj, His Royal Highness Prince Mohammed pointed out today, Hajj reflects the basic tenets of Islam of peace, tranquility, equality, love of God and care for other pilgrims and so on."

Statement from the King



Bag of the key to the door of the Ka'aba and Key to the door of the Ka'aba



Abdulaziz Public Library

This exhibition celebrates Hajj, the most important journey taken by Muslims during their lifetime. Hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, a pilgrimage that all Muslims who are able, from every nation and race across our globe, must make at least once in their lifetime.

It is a profoundly spiritual journey: Hajjis are required to leave all their worldly goods and concerns behind and submit themselves totally to the will of God as they pray together as equals around the Ka'aba, the House built by Abraham, in Makkah al-Mukarramah. This is the cradle of Islam, the Qiblah of more than 1.6 billion Muslims who turn to it five times a day during prayer. Here, over the space of five days, pilgrims carry out the set rituals that make up Hajj. It is the world's largest international gathering focusing on peace, tolerance and prayer – free from politics, dispute and debate.

Today more than 3 million Muslims every year leave their homes to take part in this pilgrimage. Many more visit this Holy City throughout the year on the lesser pilgrimage of Umrah.

This exhibition aims to tell the story of Hajj over the centuries, exploring the individual and multi-cultural experiences of pilgrims, as well as the routes taken as they are drawn in unity towards the Ka'aba. It traces the heritage of this inspirational journey up to the present day in

terms of objects, maps, books, pictures and recollections from all over the world and includes significant artifacts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Care for Makkah al-Mukarramah, for the Hajj, and for the security and welfare of all those undertaking this life changing journey and the lesser pilgrimage of Umrah, is the first priority of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques, King Abdullah, his government and his people. The Kingdom is continually looking at ways to improve transport and other facilities for Hajjis, and is currently undertaking a he expansion of the prayer space around the Ka'aba to meet the needs of the increasing number of pilgrims wanting to perform Hajj.

On behalf of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the King Abdul Aziz Public Library has worked in partnership with the British Museum to bring this Exhibition to fruition. We hope that through its visitors gain some understanding of Islam, and that it will be a source of inspiration, giving them a glimpse of the meaning of Hajj to Muslims worldwide.

Karen Armstrong in The Guardian

Karen Armstrong, the renowned scholar and commentator, writing in The Guardian, mentioned, "Ever since the Crusades, when Christians from western Europe were fighting holy wars against

Muslims in the near east, western people have often perceived Islam as a violent and intolerant faith – even though when this prejudice took root Islam had a better record of tolerance than Christianity. Recent terrorist atrocities have seemed to confirm this received idea. But if we want a peaceful world, we urgently need a more balanced view. We cannot hope to win the 'battle for hearts and minds' unless we know what is actually in them. Nor can we expect Muslims to be impressed by our liberal values if they see us succumbing unquestioningly to a medieval prejudice born in a time of extreme Christian belligerence."

Writing on the eve of the exhibition at the British Museum – Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam – Karen Armstrong observed, "Like Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians, Sikhs and secularists, some Muslims have undoubtedly been violent and intolerant, but the new exhibition at the British Museum – Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam – is a timely reminder that this is not the whole story. The Hajj is one of the five essential practices of Islam; when they make the pilgrimage to Mecca, Muslims ritually act out the central principles of their faith. Equating religion with 'belief' is a modern western aberration. Like swimming or driving, religious knowledge is practically acquired. You learn only by doing. The ancient rituals of the Hajj, which Arabs performed for centuries before Islam, have helped pilgrims to form habits of heart and mind that – pace the western stereotype – are non-violent and inclusive."

Karen Armstrong also mentioned, the Muslim Hajj is all about the Abrahamic family – not Muhammad himself. Pilgrims re-enact the story of Hagar and Ishmael, symbolically returning to the era that preceded religious chauvinism. Alas, all traditions lose their primal purity and we all fail our founders."

"But the British Museum's beautiful presentation of the Hajj can help us understand how the vast majority of the world's Muslims understand their faith. Socrates, the founder of the western rational tradition, insisted that the exercise of reason required us constantly and stringently to question received ideas and entrenched certainties. The new exhibition can indeed become a journey to the heart of Islam and also perhaps, to a more authentic and respectful western rational identity."