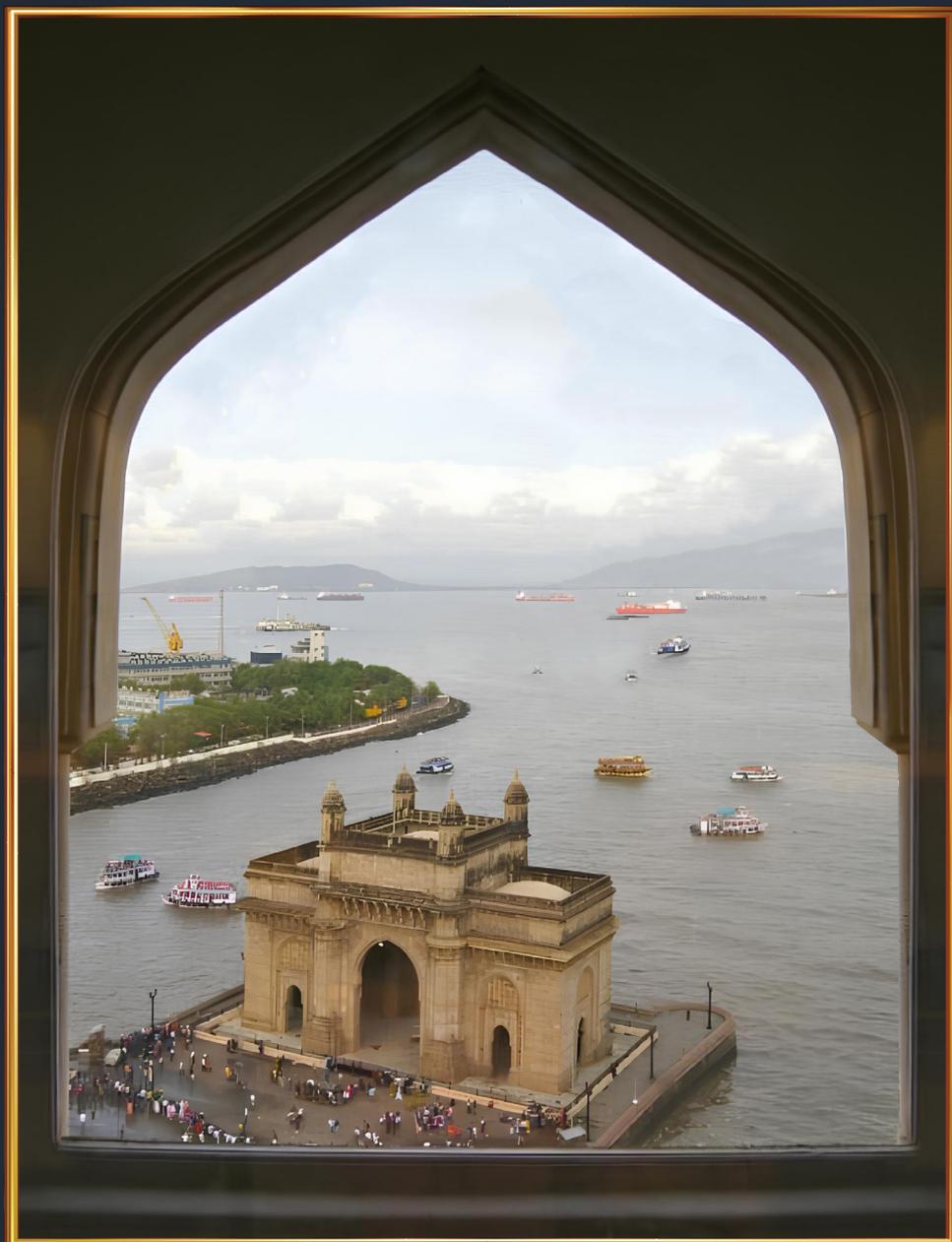




**GLOBAL COUNCIL OF  
ZOROASTRIANS TRUST  
(GCZT)**

# Newsletter



**The Mission of GCZT is to offer a platform to the Zoroastrian Community to come together and work together for the wellbeing and prosperity of the Parsi, Irani and Iranian Zoroastrian community worldwide.**

**Volume 1 - February 2024  
Email: [gczt22@gmail.com](mailto:gczt22@gmail.com)  
Website: [gczt.org](http://gczt.org)**

Putting the Years 22-23 in perspective.  
The GCZT Annual Review is here.

2022 - 2023  
Years in Review

## TOP STORIES

- GCZT was registered as a Public Trust on 14th November 2022 in Mumbai.
- The structure is bicameral. The trust is governed by GCZT Trustees on one side and Regional Representatives of Global Working Group on the other.
- Four Board Meetings of GCZT took place in 2022- 2023.
- Six respected personalities were appointed as Advisors to the Trust in 2023.
- The next Annual General Meeting of GWG will take place on 8th Jan., 2024 at Banaji Hall, in Mumbai and Annual Board Meeting of GCZT Trustees will take place on 9th Jan., 2024 at the Yacht Club, Mumbai.



### Message from the Founding Chairman, GCZT

**Er. Dr. Burjor H. Antia**

The cardinal principle of Zoroastrian religion is to help each and every member of our community and with this in mind the Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust has been formed, dedicated towards wellbeing and prosperity of our community worldwide.

**FILM ON GCZT TESTIMONIALS**  
What our Members say ...

## About GCZT:

When Parsi and Iranian community members migrated to various Regions of the Globe, a need arose to communicate with each other. Notwithstanding our diversity of thought and love for independence we came together, after several iterations and several decades, realizing that togetherness is strength. First the Regions of the Globe where our community members reside came together informally as the "Coming Together Roundtable" (CTR), which after a few years yielded to the structured "Global Working Group" (GWG); and now formally as the "Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust" (GCZT) with a Board of Trustees, Advisors with GWG as its Regional Representatives Arm to communicate with each other and coordinate our activities globally.

Togetherness is strength, the Barsam (twigs) that we tie together in our ceremonies point the way. This website [gczt.org](http://gczt.org) shall serve as our global platform for all the components of GCZT, a big tent for our worldwide community. With your indulgence and your attention this site has the potential to be our global voice. This site could be our crown jewel, let us make it so! *Atha Jamyat Yatha Afrinami!*

**Rohinton Rivetna**



**Neville Shroff, JP**

**Good morning,**  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome all members of the Global Working Group to this important gathering. Your presence here today signifies your commitment to our shared goals and your dedication to making a positive impact on the global stage.

Firstly, I wish you all a wonderful, successful and healthy New Year and may our community prosper in all parts of the world. We wish for peace, tolerance and harmony in all countries that are suffering and going through extreme hardships and our thoughts are with them.

Before starting; we are extremely delighted and very pleased to be able to announce the formation of the Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust (GCZT). Setting up a trust is an arduous task, possibly more so in India; and our enormous thanks go to our honourable Er. Dr. Burjor Antia. Without his help this would not have been possible. His extraordinary dedication and support shall always be remembered by us. We are equally appreciative of the support extended by Mr. Rohinton Rivetna and Mrs. Meher Bhesania in this matter.

I would also like to take the opportunity to thank Yazdi Tantra for all the technological aspects that he has set up, and our Communications Coordinator Katayun Kapadia from USA.

## GCZT Chairman's Message 8th January, 2024

GWG is now 15 years old and includes 10 regions. The new GCZT website is in place developed by Meher Bhesania for which we are thankful to her. Thanks to Yazdi Tantra for gifting the Parsi Directory and Zoroastrians.net websites to GCZT. Work to develop websites for application towards educational loans and medical assistance will start soon.

### **Our strategic objectives in setting up GCZT are:**

- To provide a sustainable and united Zoroastrian community and help the community members prosper globally.
- To preserve our religion through sustainable programs for our Mobeds and Agiaries.
- To inculcate in our members and especially our youth, the responsibility to look after the community for its survival, remembering our roles in society and honouring our heritage and identity.
- To help the aged and the poor in our community and upgrade Parsi General Hospital to a world class hospital with updated facilities.
- To invest particularly in our Youth and nurture innovative talent and provide educational support by way of scholarships, educational programs, and promoting literacy initiatives.

GWG will actively seek opportunities to collaborate with like-minded people and organizations, businesses, and individuals who share our vision and values. Together we will amplify our impact and create lasting change. As a result we have set up various committees to tackle issues pertaining to our community. These are just some ideas of the potential projects that we will be looking into this year through discussions and meetings with designated distinguished advisors who will guide us through possible projects and hopefully generate strong outcomes to secure long term stability.

In conclusion, we need to stand and work together in harmony with integrity, respect and teamwork for a sustainable future.

I would like to express my gratitude to each and every one of you for your dedication and contributions to the Global Working Group. Together, we have the power and a common goal to shape the future and create a better world. Let's begin our work with enthusiasm.

With best wishes,  
Neville Shroff, JP

## GCZT SETTLORS



Dr. Burjor H. Antia



Dinshaw-Tamboly



Kersy Bhesania

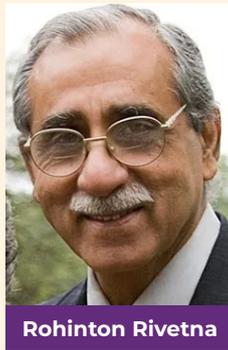
## GCZT TRUSTEES



Dr. Burjor H. Antia



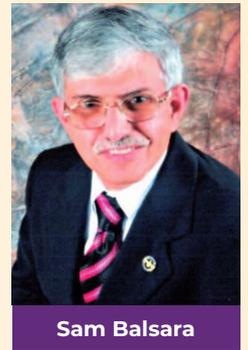
Neville Shroff



Rohinton Rivetna



Yazdi Tantra



Sam Balsara



Meher Bhesania



Viraf Mehta



Arzan Wadia



Malcolm Deboo

## GCZT ADVISORS



Dr. Rati Godrej



Noshir Dadrawala



Dorab Mistry



Homi Katgara



Adi Jehangir



Homiyar Madan



## GCZT GLOWS, GROWS AND SHINES



Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor with GCZT Trustees - (L-R) Sam Balsara, Er. Dr. Burjorji Antia , Neville Shroff, Meher Bhesania, Rohinton Rivetna and Yazdi Tantra.

### Summary of GWG and GCZT Meetings held on 8th Jan. 2024

#### At the Banaji Atash Behram Hall, Mumbai.

**8<sup>th</sup>** January 2024 proved to be a memorable day for the Global Working Group (GWG), now part of the formally registered Council of Zoroastrians Trust (GCZT) as it celebrated its 15th Anniversary. The theme of the meeting was *'Let's glow, grow and shine.'* The event was attended by a galaxy of luminaries that would make any community proud comprising Global Working Group Representative and Committee Chairs from across the world, the GCZT Settlers, Trustees and Advisors, the Honorees Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor, Er. Tehemton Mirza and Mr. Kersi Deboo (Member, National Commission for Minorities). Those who could not attend the event in person attended it via zoom.

It is said, that just as the body needs nourishment, a community needs sustenance to keep its history, values, and aspirations alive. Our community trusts, and organisations, have served the purpose successfully reminding Zoroastrians of their rich legacy and the zeal to go further and achieve higher. So has GWG of GCZT in the past 15 years developed confidence in the hearts of the community members and become a success story. GCZT is a 360 degrees initiative to empower Zoroastrian community to prosper worldwide. The vision is to nurture a caring, compassionate, and harmonious community of Parsi, Irani and Iranian Zoroastrians worldwide and bring them together and work together.

Four sessions were held at the meeting on January 8, 2024, two in the morning and two in the afternoon. The sessions were moderated by GCZT Trustee, Meher Bhesania.



The meeting started with the benediction from Vada Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor. The Chief Honoree Kersi Deboo could not attend the meeting. Instead he sent a congratulatory message which was read out by Sam Balsara at the meeting. Kersi Deboo in his message applauded the efforts put in by GCZT Settlers, Trustees and Advisors in bringing the Zoroastrian Community together and working for its progress. Thereafter a minute's silence was observed for those who have left for their heavenly abode namely, Mrs. Roshan Burjorji Antia from Mumbai, Frene Ginwala from South Africa, Byram Avari from Pakistan, Homi Davier and Sarosh Collector from Houston, USA. May their souls rest in eternal peace!

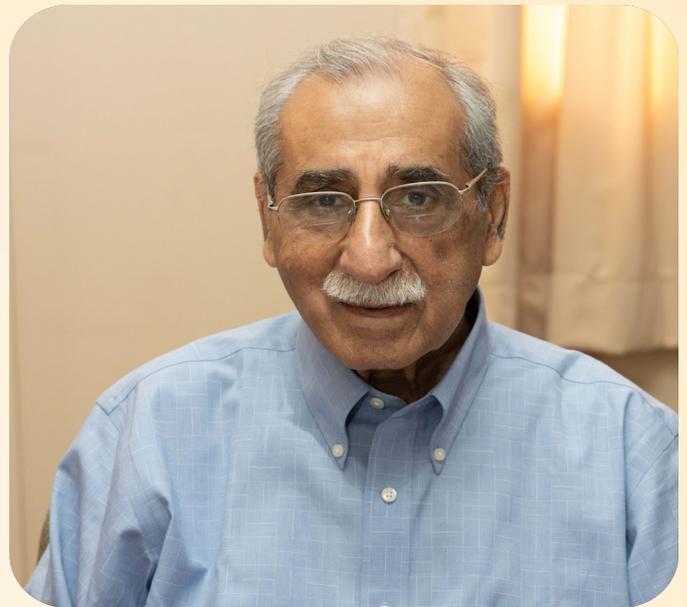


Thereafter, the Founding Chairman of GCZT Dr. Burjorji Antia addressed the participants. GCZT sincerely thanks Dr. Antia for his help in setting up of the trust, in Mumbai despite several odds. Dr. Antia in his eloquent style explained the vision and objectives of the trust which were to provide support to Zoroastrians "from the womb to the tomb". He mentioned the four initiatives that are being studied closely for the benefit of the community namely - support to the poor and the aged, health and wellness, empowerment of youth and support to Mobeds and Agiaries.

Neville Shroff in his speech lauded the efforts put in by the trustees in formalizing GCZT - the only global body representing Zoroastrians spanning ten regions worldwide. He reiterated GCZT's commitment to deal with pressing global challenges to achieve a more equitable and sustainable future for which raising resources would be of prime importance, developing innovative ideas that will drive the change, and collaborating with likeminded people. He also touched upon the core values of GCZT being - integrity, excellence, respect, non-interference, and total transparency.



Rohinton Rivetna took the participants on the journey of progression of GWG and revealed what started as the 'Coming together Round Table' at the World Zoroastrian Congress in London in the year 2005 culminated in the formation of the Global Working Group at the 9<sup>th</sup> World Zoroastrian Congress in Dubai in the year 2009. After twelve successive years of harmonious working GCZT was set up in Mumbai on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 which marks a red-letter day for the Zoroastrian Community worldwide.



Yazdi Tantra, GCZT Trustee and Secretary shared the Secretary's report highlighting the appointment of Trustees and Advisors in 2023 followed by Sam Balsara GCZT Trustee and Treasurer affirming that all work for the trust so far has been done on pro bono basis and added that efforts shall be made to increase the corpus by approaching various community members to contribute to various projects undertaken by GCZT.

The minutes of the GWG AGM in 2023 were approved.

A brief felicitation ceremony took place as Dr. Antia stepped down as Founding Chairman and Neville Shroff was appointed the next Chairman. This was amidst much praise and admiration from all for the hard work done by both.



## Scroll of Honour

Er. Dr. Buriorii Antia

Today we take the opportunity to record our appreciation for the endless hours of pro bono work done by Dr. Antia in creating this trust and explaining how to make it work and keep our community members connected across the world. It was not an easy task, but he did it with great aplomb!

His generous contribution of Rs.1 crore to GCZT in his capacity as the Settlor and Trustee will go down in the annals of GCZT history and we are all very grateful to him at GCZT. His invaluable expert advice and enthusiasm were most helpful and not only assisted us in improving the performance of the trust but also in conducting the business smoothly. All the Settlers, Trustees, Advisors and GWG Representatives have deepest admiration, respect and affection for him.

We are proud that he is not only the Founding Chairman of GCZT but of 25 other trusts. His silent support to the needy Parsis makes him an admirable Parsi Priest. He is a wonderful author and has a long list of India's leading Cos as his clientele who are willing to wait for hours to seek his formal advice, but being a humble man he is, he never makes us wait.

May God Bless him always with a healthy and happy life and may he continue to serve as a Settlor and Trustee of GCZT for years to come and keep guiding us!

# Scroll of Honour

Neville Shroff, JP

Today, we are truly delighted to see Mr. Neville Shroff, JP, Chairman, CEO of Shroff and Company Ltd, and Trustee of Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust (GCZT) taking over as the Chairman of the Global Council of Zoroastrians Trust in Mumbai with the blessings of the Founder Chairman, Er.Dr.Buriorii Antia.

In 2015, Neville was awarded the title of Justice of Peace by the Hong Kong Government and has taken up several roles serving the community. He is on the Board of the General Committee of the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce, acts as the Director of The Hong Kong Tuberculosis, Chest & Heart Diseases Association, and is on the Ruttonjee and Tang Shiu Kin Hospital Governing Board. He is also the President of the Royal Commonwealth Society, and the Hong Kong Housing Society, the President of the Zoroastrian Parsee Association of HK and serves as the President of the Parsee Zoroastrian Charity Funds of Hong Kong, Canton and Macao.

The Settlers, Trustees, Advisors and Global Representatives could not have asked for a worthier person than him as the Chairman of GCZT.

We all wish Mr. Neville Shroff JP, the very best on his journey as GCZT's new chairman and may God guide his footsteps for the next 8 years.

## Session 2

Before inviting the Regional Representatives to share their regional reports, praise was showered upon them for taking GCZT to the next level and adding a glorious chapter to GCZT's history. Compliments were conveyed to Katayun Kapadia, Communications Coordinator for her support to GCZT throughout the year.

### Regional Representatives



#### India

Viraf Mehta, the newly appointed Chairman of the Bombay Parsi Panchayet (BPP) which is the oldest organization founded between 1672 & 1675 in Mumbai was invited to present the report. Everyone congratulated Viraf Mehta on his new appointment as Chairman of BPP. Viraf Mehta said - *“five redevelopment projects are expected to kick off. Almost 40 legal cases were resolved. Financial assistance was offered to 500 needy individuals”*. Viraf was joined at the meeting by BPP Trustees Adil Malia and Hoshang Jal. Sadly Mrs. Armaity Tirandaz could not join as she was recovering from a fall and the other trustees were unable to attend.



#### North America

Arzan Wadia, President FEZANA took to the podium. FEZANA serves as the coordinating body for 27 Zoroastrian Associations in North America. It is an exemplary organization and the success stories and concerns of North America for the year 2023 were shared by Arzan Wadia saying ... *“2023 was a busy year with various events that took place throughout the year, including participation in the UN Water Conference, Parliament of World Religions, the hosting of a successful 12th World Zoroastrian Congress in New York and working towards each local Association appointing a liaison Mobed to work alongside the North American Mobeds Council (NAMC)”*.



#### Dubai

Meher Bhesania, trustee GCZT said, *“Dubai’s economy has bounced back from the coronavirus slowdown. In terms of growth, the hospitality, food, and beverage segments outperformed all other sectors. Dubai hosted over 10 million visitors from January to September, three times more compared to 2022. The companies in the Emirates increased their headcounts at the fastest pace. The property sector has made a strong recovery. The most significant event in 2023 was COP28 that signaled the “beginning of the end” of the fossil fuel era. The community members are happy. Their lifestyle is comfortable. With several colleges opening up in Dubai, Zoroastrian youth now have the option to study in the Emirate and stay close to their families.”*



## UK and Europe

Founded on October 31, 1861 by Muncherjee Cama and Dadabhai Naoroji the Zoroastrian Trust Funds of Europe (ZTFE) is a 163-year-old organization. ZTFE being the premier Zoroastrian organisation in Europe represents the interest of the Zoroastrian community with the UK Government, interfaith, religious and educational institutions. It continues to serve the community in Europe both at national and international levels from the secretariat at the magnificent Grade II\* listed art-deco Zoroastrian Centre in Harrow London. Rusi Dalal of ZTFE was invited to the podium. He presented a glorious picture of the community and shared how it is thriving and making an impact in UK despite its small numbers.

Dorab Mistry Advisor to GCZT, who joined the meeting on Zoom applauded the efforts put in by Young Zoroastrian wing of ZTFE in conducting the 8th World Zoroastrian Youth Congress (21st July to 25th July, '23) which was attended by 550 youth worldwide with an early bird package benefit of GBP 550 which included 5 nights of sharing hotel accommodation and most meals at the congress. Dr. Cyrus Poonawalla was the 'Title Sponsor' with munificent donation of GBP 50000/ -. Kudos to the 35 members team and Co-Chairs Sheherezad Kapadia and Sanaya Khambatta-Hirjee. The next highlight of the year was a successful WZCC Global Conclave (26th to 29th July '23).

Over 100 WZCC members and spouses from all over the world participated. Distinguished speakers included Lord Karan Bilimoria, Sir Ron Kalifa, VSF Global CEO Zubin Karkaria, Sam Balsara, cricket icon Farokh Engineer, Fintech entrepreneur Zar Amrolia, Corporate leader Zarin Patel, WZCC Global President Percy Master and past president Edul Daver and Rohinton Rivetna. Both events showcased the vibrant Zoroastrian spirit. The other highlights were the Coronation of H.M King Charles where Britain's minority religious leaders and President of ZTFE Malcolm Deboo were invited to participate in the Faith Leaders Procession as part of the Coronation ceremony. A landmark event was hosted by Lord Bilimoria at the House of Lords on 14th June under the auspices of the Zoroastrian All Party Parliamentary Group with distinguished Justice Rohinton Nariman as keynote speaker.

## Australia

The Zoroastrians in Sydney, Melbourne, Perth and other parts of Australia and New Zealand are characterized by two features: their strong ties with their motherland India, Pakistan and Iran and their firm commitment to serve their new homeland. Firoz Pestonji from Perth and Farida Irani from Sydney spoke on the joys and challenges of the Oceania region.

## Perth



Firoz Pestonjee said, the Zoroastrians in Perth regularly meet over Jashans on auspicious days. Muktdad Prayers also take place for the departed souls and outings are organised for the community members to visit scenic places. Seminars are held on various topics for the benefit of the business and professional community members. A 'Youth camp' will take place on 24th April 2024 in Auckland. This will help Zoroastrian youth to come together, network and build friendships. The camp is open to all Zoroastrian youth worldwide.

In terms of formation of Federation Firoz Pestonjee said that there are over 5000 Zoroastrians living in Australia (2500 in Sydney, 800 in Perth, 400 in Brisbane, 1000 in New Zealand and few more in Brisbane and Adelaide).

A draft document for the formation of Federation in Oceania region was prepared by him four years ago, however, a few points remain to be sorted out with certain organisations, but they are hopeful that the matter will get resolved amicably and the Federation will soon be a reality.

## Sydney



Farida Irani from Sydney said that the Zoroastrians in Australia and New Zealand keep meeting over Jashans, Gambhars, Navroze celebrations and Muktdads. Sunday school and sports activities are organised by the Australian Zoroastrian Association (AZA). She expressed her gratitude saying, "We are very proud of the property that we have in Sydney thanks to the benevolence of our major donors, the Arbab Guiv foundation, Zarthushti brothers and most importantly our matriarchs Late Akhtar and Nowzer Ostowari whose dream was to have a place which we could call our own". Residents in Sydney contribute to various causes and the five acres vast property is being managed by Mobed Tim Desai who ensures that it is kept in pristine condition with help from volunteers.

Farida Irani keeps organising discourses with esteemed scholar Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia in India on topics pertaining to Zoroastrianism and people join from overseas. The programs are broadcasted live on zoom through AZA. The wonderful Dar-e-Mehr in Sydney serves as an epicenter for various activities and functions.

Last year on Navroze, the Powerhouse Museum in Sydney had approached Farida Irani to showcase the significance of the 'haft sheen/seen' table the Zarthusthi way. She showcased it beautifully explaining the origins of the custom from the time of King Jamshed and enlightened the significance of "Ameshaspands" and the 'Yazads' in our religion and described how this custom is celebrated in Iran, India, and Pakistan and globally. This year the Powerhouse committee has approached her once again, and she is excited about showcasing the custom with a variation as the chair of the committee Dr. Meherassa wants to head start the day with this program. A memorable film on 'the Life and times of Zarathushtra' will also be screened.

Farida concluded by saying that Khurshed Mirza, the ex-President of Zoroastrian Association in Victoria (ZAV) is in the process of investing in a Dar-e-Mehr himself in Melbourne as they have a very active group that holds Jashans, Muktdads and Sunday school programs. This will be Khurshed Mirza's personal project, and they are all very proud of him. Queensland has a small happy group mainly from Brisbane and the Gold Coast who get together regularly. Adelaide also has a small group of Zoroastrians who keep meeting regularly.



**As a few Regional Representatives could not attend the meeting they sent their messages or spoke via zoom.**

### **Let us start with Iran.**

Hidden away in the folds of the Iranian mountains lie the holy towns of Zoroastrians. They represent a heritage that goes back thousands of years and a religion that pre-dates Christianity and Islam. Over 20,000 Zoroastrians still live in Iran. Despite antiquity the community has preserved its customs, religious beliefs, texts and prayers. The Government recognizes Zoroastrians as a religious minority, granting them freedom of worship and representation in the Parliament, and we are fortunate to have Dr. Esfandiar Ekhtiyari as the MP of Zoroastrians in Iran.

Sadly, Dr. Eekhtiyari and Mobed Firouzgary could not make it to this meeting, but they sent their blessings to us, and Alayar Dabestani from Seattle sent a brief presentation on challenges faced by our community members in Iran which covered four areas:

1. Strengthening healthcare by providing financial assistance to senior homes and health care services in Tehran and Yazd;
2. Invest in education and cultural programs by providing financial assistance to schools and cultural organisations mainly in Yazd, Tehran and Kerman;
3. Create employment opportunities and connect Zoroastrians with potential employees and
4. Strengthen the cultural sector of Zoroastrian community by providing financial help to publishers, news magazine and websites.



### **Singapore**

The success story of Zoroastrians in Singapore started with the arrival of Muncherjee and other well-known philanthropists Pesi Daver, Navroji Mistree and more. Today the community has grown over 300 members. They contribute a lot to the rich intellectual and artistic landscape of Singapore. Homiyar Vasania joined the meeting via zoom and shared important news relating to the community and the 13th World Zoroastrian Congress that is scheduled to take place in Singapore from 27th to 29th December 2026. The venue of the Congress is Marina Bay Sands Convention Center. The Congress team is extremely excited to host an inclusive Congress of Parsi, Irani and Iranian Zoroastrians from around the world. The team of volunteers and subcommittees have started their work in earnest. The GWG Core Committee Members are being regularly updated on the progress. The good news is that the Parsi Zoroastrian museum which was inaugurated on 14th March, 2022, at the Zoroastrian House, on Desker Road in Rochor gives a wonderful chance to the Singaporeans to learn more about the Parsi Community.

The museum showcases Parsi history, traditions and culture and throws light on Zoroastrianism one of the ten recognised religions in Singapore. Several high profile dignitaries have visited the Museum and H.E The Indian High Commissioner with his team will be visiting it in February this year.



## Pakistan

It is said, the Zoroastrians in Pakistan settled in waves, first in the 16th century and thereafter in the 1930's. They mainly came from Gujarat and settled in Sind. When the partition of India took place in 1947 several Zoroastrians were already living in Pakistan. The community has a wonderful infrastructure of Anjumans, charitable trusts, schools, hospitals, agiyaries and towers of silence. In 2004, there were more than 2000 Zoroastrians living in Pakistan but now the numbers have dwindled to 800. Several notable Zoroastrians have contributed to Pakistan in many ways and currently the legacy continues with the Avaris.

Dinshaw Avari (son of late Byram Avari) of Avari Group, joined the meeting via zoom from Karachi. Dinshaw is the new Regional Representative of GWG. He spoke on the Parsi Clinic that has moved from Anjuman Baug to Bomansha Minorcher Homji Parsi General Hospital with doctors' coverage 7 days a week. Educational interest free loans to youth and Zarthushti Banu Mandal giving over Rs. 5 million support to education. The buildings are falling vacant with community numbers shrinking so the cost of maintenance is rising and with Indian visas becoming increasingly difficult it is becoming difficult to get mobeds.

## South Africa

Unfortunately, Soli Shapurji could not attend the meeting. In South Africa, the actual wave of Zoroastrians started in 1920's. Around 200 Zoroastrians went to Johannesburg and Durban but the laws passed by the government did not help the community to thrive.

Although miniscule in number late Frene Ginwala was the democratically elected speaker in the National Assembly in South Africa and the first woman ever. And her sister Dr. Khorshed was South Africa's first Ambassador to Italy in 1994. There are hardly any Zoroastrians left in South Africa.



**Finally, it was lunch time. Thanks to Tanaz Godiwalla for serving sumptuous food which was thoroughly enjoyed by all participants.**

## Session 3

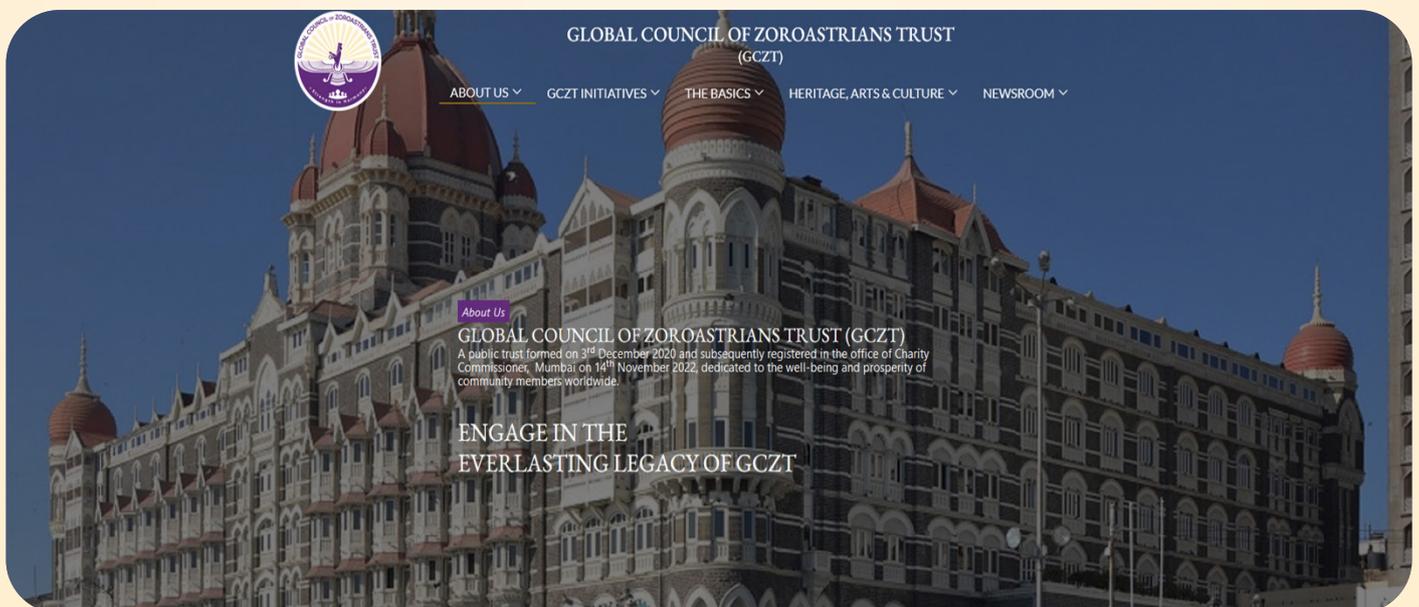
### Mumbai



The third session started with spotlight on the proposed World Zoroastrian Youth Congress to be held in Mumbai in December 2027. Four dynamic young members from ZYNG, - Zenia Pavri (Congress Co-Chair), Sanaya Mehta (Congress Co-Chair), and Committee Members - Jennifer Batliwalla and Burjis Zaveri made a wonderful presentation after they were introduced by Viraf Mehta. Their presentation covered key areas such as the venue of the congress, accommodation on-site and offsite, proposed programs and more .... There is no doubt Mumbai will host a majestic congress as the team is all charged up and have a clear vision.

Thereafter Standing Committee Members shared the progress made by their respective Committees.

### Arts and Culture Committee - Meher Bhesania



Meher Bhesania said that in the last fifteen years, the Arts and Culture Committee has released several coffee table books and films on Zoroastrianism. This year's contribution is no less. The GCZT website was developed by her with technical support from On-Lyne Computers in India. It was officially inaugurated and launched by GCZT Chairman, Neville Shroff, on 8th Jan. 2024. A film on the new website depicting its excellent features was shown to the participants. Meher Bhesania added that this website will serve as a global platform, a big tent for our worldwide community. With everyone's indulgence this site has the potential to become the global voice and will become a crown in the jewel of GCZT.

## Mobeds & Mobedi - Dasturji Khurshed Dastoor & Er. Tehemton Mirza

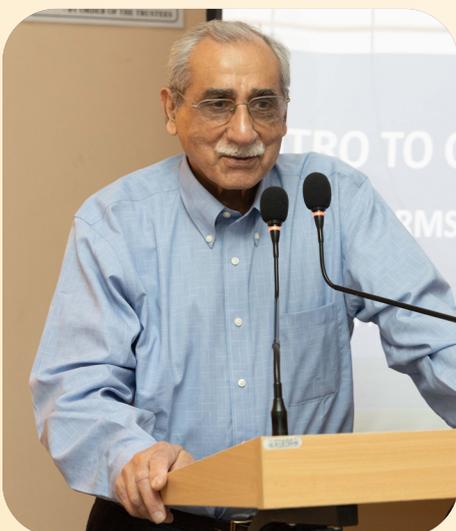


Mobeds are the glue that hold the community together. Prophet Zarathustra was himself a priest. Some of the desirable attributes of a Mobed are - ability to perform rituals, expand community ministry and outreach and come up with ideas to connect meaningfully with the community members. A Mobed must have innate wisdom; know the scriptures and transform minds to do good for the community.

Dasturji Khurshed spoke on the conditions of the Mobeds in India and requested for increase in their salaries especially for those who perform higher liturgical ceremonies.

Mobed Tehemton Mirza spoke on the services rendered by North American Mobed Council (NAMC), an independent organization with a mission to serve the religious and spiritual needs of the North American Zoroastrian community. NAMC plans to start training of young, next generation Mobeds with training being provided by Dr. Ramiyar Karanjia on Avesta language and the meaning of our prayers. An Educational Fund has been established the name of Ervad Soli Dastur. NAMC also offers courses for Mobeds on ceremonies, prayers, ministry, and outreach. Lectures are offered and discussion take place with laity on various religious topics.

## Infrastructure Committee - Rustom Engineer and Rohinton Rivetna



Rohinton Rivetna shared his thoughts on global and regional infrastructure needs of the community worldwide. Special request was once again made to BPP to help in making a provision for an international house/accommodation in Mumbai for NRI Zoroastrians' at a fee where they could come and stay and give their children an exposure to the Parsi way of life.

Apart from this, he said that funding support is important and can be generated from two main sources – bequests and a commercial component. The need to develop the ethic of collective giving should be inculcated and each household should give to the Agiaries/Associations/Charity of their choice. FEZANA is developing plans for setting up a Zoroastrian Museum in Houston. A white paper on 'Infrastructure for Zoroastrian Community worldwide' was submitted.

## UN NGO - Dr. Behram Pastakia



The United Nations is central in global efforts to solve problems that challenge humanity. FEZANA in the year 1997 was placed on the roster of NGO in consultative status with Economic and Social Council of UN. It is now registered with the Department of Global Communications. The UN-NGO Committee became FEZANA Standing Committee in April 2018. It supports 17 sustainable development goals of the UN. Dr. Behram Pastakia, FEZANA's representative elaborated on various programs and Conferences in which the FEZANA team participated: Women's empowerment with Digitization in the Pre-Post Covid Era, UN Water Conference in New York, and launching of the Haft Sheen Garden Project. It plans to participate in the 68th Commission on the Status of Women in March 2024. He also shed light on the 'Ava Project' for Zoroastrians all over the world to take care of the environment. Volunteers are gathering in smaller groups in all areas of the world to do local water cleanup. The Ava project was also presented at the 12th World Zoroastrian Congress in New York.

## Business and Commerce Committee - Percy Master



The prosperity of a community is linked to its businesses. Hence the World Zarathushti Chamber of Commerce (WZCC) was formed in the year 2000, to facilitate networking, enhance Trade and Commerce and re-energise the Entrepreneurial Spirit in the community in order to bring about economic prosperity for all Zarathushtis worldwide. He thanked our stalwarts Rohinton Rivetna, late Homi Davier, late Sarosh Collector, Kobad Zarolia, and Edul Daver as pioneers of WZCC. Thanks was also conveyed to Minoo Shroff for his unstinting support in setting up the WZCC Chamber in India and working towards its growth. If WZCC has gained a name and fame in India a lot of credit goes to Minoo Shroff and his very worthy successors. Percy Master, the current President spoke eloquently saying almost all goals set out by the Chamber in 2023 were achieved namely: upgrading the communication systems, social media and revamping of the WZCC website. WZCC continued with its system of granting interest free loans to businesses and professionals up to Rs.25/- lacs.

The same facility is available in North America where loans are extended up to USD 50,000/- through the Zoroastrian Entrepreneurial Development Fund (ZEDF). Scholarships for master's program with focus on entrepreneurship are also extended. The strategic plan for 2022-2024 is in place. MOUs have been signed with five chambers to promote global networking and expand business and professional bandwidth. Brand WZCC was promoted by development of a film on WZCC which has been uploaded on the website (wzcc.org).

## Youth - Arzan Wadia



Youth empowerment creates a sense of responsibility and leadership due to which youth can understand and identify the actual practical problems of the community. GCZT will work in the direction of strengthening and unifying the youth through leadership programs, holding youth congresses, inter-generational dialogues, and action-oriented programs. Women and girls will also play a prominent role and be equal partners. Arzan Wadia shared details on the very successful 'Return to Roots' program.

## Education Committee - Farrokh Rustomji



Farrokh Rustomji of Education Committee and the CEO of R.D.Sethna Trust said that scholarships to students are awarded by the R.D.Sethna Trust in India. Similarly FEZANA also awards scholarships to students in North America. Thereafter he touched on the Zoroastrian Faculty Network program ably headed by Farrokh Mistree in the US whose activities covered hosting webinars, conversations with budding Zarathushti Entrepreneurs, remote internships assistance to high school students in the US, spotlights, developing Iranian Zoroastrian Youth network with a view to offering courses on becoming Zoroastrian entrepreneurs in Iran. Two members - Arezoo and Radman participated in the 'Tiger's Den' program at Pune Conclave and Arezoo Gharibshahi participated in the FEZANA 'Return to Roots'

**The third session ended successfully with a short break for tea/coffee and refreshments.**



## **Support to poor and aged.** (Advisors Dinshaw Tamboly and Adi Jehangir)

### **Update received was:**

- Financial support in 2023 was extended to 2646 families in various parts of India.
- Additional support was extended in other areas like education & medical.
- Suggestion was received to create a portal for poor and needy to submit applications for financial support.

## **Mobeds and Agiaries** (Advisors Dinshaw Tamboly and Noshir Dadrawala)

### **Concerns expressed were:**

- Only 14 boys are under training at Dadar Athornan Madressa.
- A need to restore Mobeds into leadership roles exists.
- The cost of repairs and maintenance of various agiaries across India is high

## **Empowering Youth** (Advisor Homiyar Madan)

### **Suggestions received were as follows:**

- Hold Career Exploration Workshops.
- Hold Mentorship Identification Programs.
- Create Professional Teams and hold Professional Interactive Sessions.
- Provide financial assistance to youth to pursue entrepreneurship.
- Connect youth with reputed companies for getting employment.

Rohinton Rivetna in his closing remarks said - "Being a Zoroastrian is something to be proud of. The community is worth saving, Complacency is our enemy - we should constantly be monitoring our demographics and take timely actions. Our youngsters need to be inspired and motivated to do whatever it takes to preserve our religion and strengthen our community".

Tentatively the venue for the next meeting will be Mumbai. Arzan Wadia delivered a vote of thanks and Meher Bhesania thanked all the participants for attending the meeting and brought the meeting to a close.

# PICS FROM THE EVENT



