

TOWARDS THE SUSTENANCE OF RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND HARMONY IN LAGOS STATE: THE ROLE OF THE NIGERIA INTER-RELIGIOUS COUNCIL (NIREC), LAGOS STATE CHAPTER

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Abstract

In the last sixteen years of democratic rule in Nigeria, Lagos State has witnessed relative calm and peaceful co-existence among the adherents of the two major religions, (Islam and Christianity). This is not to say that there is absence of intra and inter-religious frictions but such are usually contained without escalating into religious crisis. This development is a direct result of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council, (NIREC) Lagos State Chapter, an institutionalized intervention group saddled with the responsibility of interceding in inter- religious conflicts and promoting peace and religious tolerance and harmony in Lagos State. In view of the above, the activities of this group vis a vis its *modus operandi* and the support of the Lagos State government in sustaining religious tolerance is worthy of assessment. This paper finds out that through NIREC's efforts a number of issues which were capable of causing religious conflicts among adherents of religious bodies in Lagos State were resolved.

Keywords: Tolerance, Harmony, Love, Forgiveness, Dialogue, Lagos State.

Introduction

The issue of intolerance has been on the increase in Nigeria today, causing death, violence, religious persecution as well as confrontations on different levels. Sometimes, it is ethnic and religious, and at other times, it is political and social issues. In every situation, it is evil and painful. But in all of these, it is the ethno-religious crises that are more and common in Nigeria. Such crises had occurred between Christians and Muslims, particularly in the Northern part. In fairness, these crises do not have long history in Nigeria. Religious crisis became pronounced in the early 1980's with the Maitatsine uprising in Kano to the Kafanchan crisis of 1987, in Southern Kaduna and quickly followed by the Zangon Kataf; then recently the Boko Haram insurgency and other crises, all in the same vicinity. It is apt to mention that the causes of these religious crises are multi-faceted. They include ethnicity, unhealthy

rivalry, fear of domination or extermination, aggressive approach to evangelism and *da'wah*, impunity, selfishness, mistrust, suspicion, ignorance and above all poor leadership and bad governance. The issue of poor leadership and bad governance has explained how the Boko Haram movement has been able to transform itself from small Islamic group in Yobe State to a militant movement that wreaks havoc and destruction in the whole North Eastern States. The above scenario notwithstanding, is not the state of things in the South-Western part of Nigeria, Lagos State precisely. This paper therefore seeks to examine the relative calm and peace in Lagos State taking into consideration the role of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC), in bringing about the present development.

Religious Tolerance from the Islamic Frame Work

The term tolerance has been defined in so many ways by scholars, but they all arrived at the same conclusion that, tolerance is concerned with the ability to accept or accommodate pain or hardship arising from behaviours or beliefs of others. For instance, Chambers Dictionary defines it to be the ability to resist or endure pain or hardship; the disposition, ability or willingness to be fair towards accepting of different religious, political beliefs and opinion.¹

Tolerance, which sometimes is used in place of words like respect, generosity, or forbearance and fortitude, is the most essential elements of moral systems. Not only this, it is a very important source of spiritual discipline and celestial virtue of perfected people.²

When it comes to religious tolerance, it assumes the view that a person does not discriminate against another person's religious beliefs, even if they think that the person's belief is wrong. Therefore, religious tolerance teaches individuals to be more loving and trusting while enacting the rule of 'love thy neighbour and thy enemy'.³ It equally involves allowing others to practice their faith without interruption, harassment or discrimination. Without religious tolerance members of different religions often find themselves as the target for hatred, disrespect, discrimination and violence.⁴

From the perspective of Islam, tolerance is synonymous with forgiveness having the same connotations, implications and reference in the Qur'ān. This is why both words are given great importance in the messages of the prophets; who from time to time, have the duty of educating their subjects towards forgiveness and tolerance. Going through passages of the Qur'ān, one finds references pointing to the Qur'ān as the source of leniency, forgiveness and tolerance. The Qur'ān always accepts forgiveness and tolerance as basic principles. This is why Muslims are introduced in the following manner:

And the servants of (God) the Merciful are those who walk on the earth in humility and sedateness, and when the

foolish address them with (bad words) they reply back with mild words of gentleness. (Q 25:63)

And those who do not bear witness to falsehood, and if they pass by some evil play or evil talk, they pass by it with dignity. (Q 25:72)

And when they hear *al-Laghw* (dirty, false, evil vain talk), they withdraw from it and say: ‘‘To us our deeds and to you your deeds. Peace be to you. We seek not (the way of) the ignorant (Q 28:55)

The general teaching of the above references is the manifestation of good disposition of Muslims when they are encountered with ugly scenes. While examining the life of the Prophet (SAW), we discovered that the Makkans, his own people, inflicted so much suffering on him that he finally migrated to Madina. Even after that the next 5 years were far from peaceful. However, when he conquered Makka without bloodshed, in the twenty first year of his prophethood, he asked the Makkan unbelievers ‘‘How do you expect me to treat you?’’ They responded unanimously: You are a noble one, the son of a noble one.’’ He then told them his decision: ‘‘you may leave, for no reproach this day shall be on to you. May God forgive you, He is the Most Compassionate.’’⁵

The concept of tolerance in Islām is such that the Prophet even prohibited verbal abuse of unbelievers even at the slightest provocation⁶ This goes a long way to prove the Qur’ānic injunction that urges forgiveness and tolerance in this way, ‘‘.....who repress (swallow) anger and who pardon people; verily, Allah loves the good doers’’. (Q3:134)

Muḥammad ‘Allī, while commenting on the above reference said that the verse has on many occasions inspired the noblest thoughts of toleration and charitableness. He explains further that restraining of anger, pardoning and doing good to each other as espoused by the verse are great qualities that strengthen the bond of union which is necessary for success.⁷ Muslims are therefore enjoined not to retaliate when verbally abused or attacked. If possible, they should act as if they had no hand or tongue with which to respond and no heart with which to resent. They must swallow their anger and close their eyes to the fault of others.⁸

Formation of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)

The idea to form the Nigeria inter-Religious Council was reached in a joint meeting of the representatives of the two main religions, (Islām and Christianity) on the 11th day of September 1999. The association which was determined to forge inter-religious harmony and concord was formally inaugurated on the 29th day of September 1999.⁹ As a platform for positive engagement to resolve issues which were characterized by a disturbing

atmosphere of mistrust, fear and hostility, especially between the leaderships of the two major religions, the council would engender meaningful discourse, improve communication and understanding and change the dynamics of Nigeria environment to that of trust and confidence.¹⁰ The council is composed of 25 members each from the two religions and co-chaired by the Sultan of Sokoto in his capacity as the President-General of the Nigeria Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs, and the President of the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN).¹¹

The NIREC has the following as its functions:

- (i) To honestly and sincerely try by themselves and through them, their followership, to understand the true teachings of the two religions – Christianity and Islam – including their peculiarities and personal mannerisms through discussions, workshops, seminars, conferences, pamphleteering, etc.
- (ii) To create a permanent and sustainable channel of communication and interaction thereby promoting dialogue between Christians and Muslims in Nigeria so that the members of both faiths may have mutual understanding of each other's religions position, co-existence among all the people of Nigeria irrespective of their religions or ethnic affiliations;
- (iii) To promote and inculcate moral, ethical, social and cultural values of the two faiths for the rebirth and rebuilding of a better society;
- (iv) To provide a forum for mutual co-operation and promotion of the welfare of all citizens in the nation;
- (v) To create for and channels for the peaceful resolution of any friction or misunderstanding that may arise from time to time;
- (vi) To serve as an avenue for articulating cordial relationship amongst the various religious groups and between them and the government;
- (vii) To assist the Federal, State and Local Government of Nigeria and the populace by emphasizing and accentuating the positive roles religion should play in nation building and development;
- (viii) To serve as a forum to achieve national goals, economic growth, national unity and promotion of political stability;
- (ix) To consider and make recommendations to the federal and other levels of government on matters that may assist in fostering spiritual development of Nigerians;
- (x) To make recommendations on such other matters as the Federal and other levels of government may from time to time refer to the council.

- (xi) To network with organizations of similar aims at home and internationally, for the furtherance of the objectives of the council.¹²

The Inauguration of NIREC Lagos State Chapter

The NIREC constitution allows the inauguration of the council at state and local government levels in order to perform the council's functions at such levels. The state and local government chapters shall consist of 7 and 5 members respectively with representatives each from the Christian and Muslim groups. There shall be Co-Chairmen one from each group and to be appointed from amongst members of the Council at State and Local Government levels.¹³

It is in line with the above provision that the Lagos State chapter of NIREC was inaugurated with the peoples' mandate to foster peaceful and harmonious interaction between the adherents of the two major religions in the state. The formal inauguration of the Lagos State Chapter of NIREC was performed by the then Governor of Lagos State, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu on Thursday 21st September, 2006.¹⁴ The membership of the Council, Lagos State Chapter, which is 14 comprising of 7 members each from Christian and Muslim communities is drawn from a host of very distinguished and illustrious religious leaders of various missionary callings.¹⁵ For effective result, the Ministry of Home Affairs and culture do not only provide administrative support but also work hand in hand with the state chapter of NIREC for meaningful dialogue and to ensure peace and harmony in Lagos State.

NIREC Lagos State Chapter: *Modus Operandi*/Approach

The fact cannot be denied that a number of religious issues capable of causing religious frictions in the state were witnessed among the adherents of the two religions; but for timely intervention of NIREC, Lagos State Chapter, its escalation into wanton destruction of lives and properties would not have been averted.

The modes of Operation of the Council are similar to those of other similar organization saddled with the responsibility of resolving conflicts. A number of petitions and reported cases of inter faith nature are received by the council. Some are channeled through the Governor, Ministry of Home Affairs and Cultures or directly to the Council. Those rooted through other channels are eventually forwarded to the Council for quick action. It needs to be mentioned that members of the council in the course of their duties displayed excessive patience and tolerance in hearing the cases brought before them.¹⁶

As part from their modes of operation, whenever a case is reported¹⁷ or a problem rears its ugly head, the council quickly intervened by holding meetings with stakeholders, conducting site inspections and visitations; and taking photographs and video recordings of the actual situations on ground.

Members also formed themselves into committees for effective resolution. Recommendations made in respect of all petitions and reported cases are forwarded to His Excellency, the Governor of the state for his approval and subsequently communicated to the relevant stakeholders.¹⁸

The approach of the Council to issues brought to them is simple, tactical and practical. Firstly, it affirmed the sanctity of human life, Muslims and Christians, and insisted that anybody who takes the law into his hands, regardless of the circumstances, must bear the full legal consequences of his action. Secondly, its tactical approach to issues is taken to minimize loss of life and to ensure that the crisis is contained in the primary area it occurred.

Based on this fact, issues are addressed on the level of religious leaders' basis. For instance, when members are to visit a site in dispute for arbitration, they are all clad in full regalia of a typical religious leaders such that when parties in dispute sight them, they have the believe that issues at hand would be resolved.¹⁹

An Assessment of the Role of NIREC Lagos State Chapter in Ensuring Peace in Lagos State

The fact is not in doubt that the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) Lagos State Chapter, has been in existence for close to a decade and up to date, it has had several meetings and successfully intervened and resolved several issues which were capable of causing religious friction among the adherents of the two major religions in the state. This has been made possible with the moral and financial support of the Lagos State Government. However, in assessing the role of the Council, we shall present a number of arbitrations²⁰ in which the council has been involved in response to various petitions and reported cases of inter-faith nature.

In 2010, the council responded to a correspondence from the Chief Imam of Lagos State which requested for quick intervention of the Council on the production of a VCD by Alfa Sule, titled: "*Take Heed*" (*Sora*). The purported producer of the VCD was accused of using the name "*Alfa Sule*" in a comical manner; bastardizing the expression *Lailaha illa llah* and subjecting the Islamic mode of dressing to ridicule; the careful naming of the make-belief *Wolis* (Prophet) like, *Woli Warrior*, *Woli Gabage* etc; that no Christian name was bastardized whatsoever in the so called comedy VCD and that the final solution to the stated problem was achieved through the acclaimed blood of Jesus. After watching the purported VCD, the Council observed the following:

- (a) that the production lacks moral and is capable of causing religious crisis;
- (b) that most of the producers and artistes need to be well educated and enlightened about the likely effect of their productions;

- (c) that the artiste and producer of the VCD “Take Heed” are resident in Ibadan, Oyo State;
- (d) that there are other artistes like St. Janet that are using their music to bastardize divine worship;
- (e) that the production even depicted the supremacy of one sect over another within the same religious belief, thereby causing religious enmity.

Following the above observations, the Council resolved as follows:

- (i) that a letter of acknowledgement of the receipt of the letter and appeal for patience be written to the Chief Imam of Lagos indicating that necessary action is being taken on the matter;
- (ii) that the Producer, the Artiste of the VCD and St. Janet be summoned to appear before the council;
- (iii) that the Council should organize a conference where all the stakeholders in the industry and the Censors Board would be invited to brief them not to toy with religious matters which could snowball into religious fracas and
- (iv) that the Council’s resolution on the matter be forwarded to the National Body of NIREC.

The quick intervention of the Council on this matter definitely averted its negative effect on the society. It would be recalled that a similar case of the Denmark cartoon which painted the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in a bad manner resonated throughout the whole world including Nigeria where lives and properties were destroyed. The VCD ceased to be played and subsequent productions of such VCD were avoided.²⁰

Another case in point was reported to the Council through the Governor by the Chief Imam of Badagry Division alleging that a Lady Evangelist, Bose Ogundiran, the founder of *Adaba Emi* Church of Cherubim and Seraphim stood on the Holy Qur’an at about 6.30am of 4th April, 2010. The case had earlier been reported to Morogbo Police Station by Ijotun Muslim Community, Presenting the Holy Qur’an as evidence. The Ijotun Muslim community later reported the case to the Chief Imam of Badagry Division who summoned a meeting attended by the Ijotun Muslim Community, Evangelist Bose Ogundiran and her husband, and a group of Muslim Elders and *Alfas* within the division. However, in order to prevent its escalation into a religious fracas, the case was brought to the Council for intervention.

The Council while looking into the case considered the following pieces of advice given by the Honourable Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs and Culture.

- (i) that NIREC should be subtle in its investigation on the matter so as not to “open up healing wounds”;
- (ii) that all those that had intervened should be commended in writing for their laudable roles and

- (iii) that the Evangelist involved should be invited to a meeting and warned to forestall future re-occurrence.

Acting on the above advice, the Council carefully deliberated on the matter and later resolved as follows:

- (i) that a group visitation to the site in dispute for an on the spot assessment should be made; and that the process of the visitation would include: visit to the Chief Imam of Badagry Division, visit to the D.P.O. Morogbo Police Station; visit to the site in dispute.
- (ii) that the D.P.O. Morogbo Police Station be finally informed of the proposed Council's visit and summon all the affected parties to converge for a meeting at a venue to be provided by the D.P.O.;
- (iii) that the PR Unit of the Ministry should be contacted for necessary coverage of the event.

The Council eventually made the proposed visits to the parties involved in the case. Having listened to the parties involved, the Council thereafter implored the parties involved to fence their premises; the Evangelist was called to adhere to C.A.N's directive of observing night vigil once a month and that the community should endeavour to maintain peace and order. Consequently, the case was put to rest. The D.P.O. Morogbo Police station having expressed his appreciation promised that such similar cases within the area of his jurisdiction would be referred to the Council for arbitration.²¹

Another very important case that is capable of creating public nuisance was reported to the Council. The case involved a Pastor, Chuckwuma I.K. of Lord's Gracious Deliverance Ministry who was accused of constituting public nuisance through his mode of worship. In his monthly programme tagged "*Koboko*", he instructed his church members to flog their imaginary enemies, problems and bondages by beating the floor.

Taking action on this matter, the Council set up a 4-man committee to investigate and report back to the Council. The committee after its investigation found out that:

- (i) the Pastor was formerly a businessman;
- (ii) he never had a formal training as a Pastor;
- (iii) he claimed to have received the call from God who touched and directed him on what to say;
- (iv) he never subjected any members to strokes of the cane nor inflict serious injuries on his followers;
- (v) he never preached or incited against the Islamic folks or against other Pentecostal Churches;
- (vi) he has a programme of every last Friday on the month tagged "*Koboko*" night where members were instructed to flog their

- imaginary enemies, problems or bondages away by flogging and beating the floor;
- (vii) the church was not registered as a member of the Pentecostal Fellowship of Nigeria (PFN).

The findings of the committee was thereafter deliberated upon by the Council and resolved thus:

- (i) that Pastor Chuckwuma be assisted to register with a Bible College for formal training and also with the PFN Branch nearest to him;
- (ii) that Bishop Amu, who had earlier volunteered, should pay unscheduled visit to the place of worship to ascertain decorum and give him more counseling.²²

The Council also arbitrated in a number of Boundary/Land issues which are capable of causing religious friction. A case in point which involved Christ Apostolic Church and Muslim Community in Apapa on land dispute was reported to the Council in January 2010. The Council intervened and resolved that:

- (i) the leaders and adherents of the two religions in dispute should endeavour to tolerate one another and live in harmony as neither of the two religions preach violence;
- (ii) the issues surrounding the ownership of the setback and the legality of the structure should be directed to relevant agencies for consideration;
- (iii) the loud speakers for the Mosque should be kept within reasonable level of volume in order not to disturb neighbours and other residents in the community;
- (iv) the agreement should be prepared and signed by NIREC Co-Chairmen and representatives of the two religions.²³

The Council also intervened and settled a case of land encroachment involving wonders of God Church and Mr. Kazeem Gbadamosi Eletu. The petition had alleged that Mr. Kazeem Eletu of Osapa Muslim Community of encroachment on the land belonging to the Church for the purpose of *Eid al-Fitr* and *Eid al-Kabir* prayers. The Council after reviewing the report of members selected to visit the site in dispute resolved to adopt the report and recommendation of the committee that both parties should ensure good neighbourliness and maintain peaceful religious co-existence at all times.²⁴

From the avalanche of cases resolved by the Council, it was observed that members of the Council have displayed high sense of maturity, diligence, patience, mastery and understanding of the tasks before them. So far in the arbitrations, there has been no time when resolutions taken on matters were based on prejudice. A level playing ground has been employed at all times. More so, there exist no conflicts between members on cases involving inter-

religious intolerance. This had actually helped a great deal in resolving religious issues.

Aside from arbitration, the Council as part of its measures to ensure and strengthen peace in the state has organized a number of seminars to educate and sensitize religious leaders and their adherents on the need to respect the tenets and beliefs of other religions for a harmonious co-existence. One of such seminars was organized in conjunction with the United States Information Service (USIS) with the theme: *Morality, Religion and National Security: Youths on Call*. The event which was held on the 3rd of May, 2012 was targeted at the Youth for the purpose of sensitizing them on the need to maintain peace, remain morally upright and be tolerant of people of other faith.²⁵ Also, in a bid address the spate of insecurity in the country, the Council under the auspices of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Culture convened an Interfaith Conference with the theme: “Peace, Religious Harmony and Good Governance: Issues and challenges”. The Conference which was aimed at how to achieve religious harmony among various religious groups in Lagos State came up between Monday 19th and Tuesday 20th May, 2014 and seasoned scholars presented papers bordering on religious harmony and the need to have a conducive environment for good governance.²⁶

Conclusion

Barely a decade into its existence, the NIREC Lagos State Chapter, has really lived up to expectation in the discharge of its duties. This is manifested in the feedback generated from the masses in view of their incessant calls for intervention on matters that are capable of causing loss of lives and properties. One needs to appreciate the Council’s activities which revolved around conflict resolution as it places priorities on the life of the common man. While it is indeed difficult to visualize a human society or group that is free of conflict, in view of people’s opposing beliefs, needs, ideas, values, or goals; the ability to resolve such conflicts, most especially those that are inspired by religion will go a long way to avert crisis. Lagos State is being adjudged to be relative calm and peaceful as it relate to religious practices. This couldn’t have been possible if the state government has not been supportive. The government through the Ministry of Home Affairs and Culture from inception has provided material, moral and financial support in addition to a conducive atmosphere to operate.

More so, in recognition of the fact that governance is about the people, the state government used to felicitate with adherents of both religions during major festivals and invite leaders of various religious groups to annual State/National functions.²⁷ The essence of this is to sustain the buy-in of the opinion moulders and further create avenue for interaction. This has actually enhanced inter/intra religious understanding and improved tolerance among the religious leaders and their followers.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

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2. Fethullah Gulen; *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, New Jersey, Tughra Books, 2011, p.34.
3. Marc Gopin; *Holy War, Holy Peace: How Religion Can Bring Peace to the Middle East*, New York, Oxford University Press, 2002, p.4
4. Hans Kung; *Christianity and the World Religions: Paths of Dialogue with Islam*, New York, Doubleday, 1986, p.442
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6. *Ibid*, p.61
7. Maulana Muhammad Ali; *The Holy Qur’an with English Translation and Commentary*, U.S.A., Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha’at Islam Lahore Inc., 2002, p.173
8. Fethullah Gulen; M., *Toward a Global Civilization of Love and Tolerance*, p.60
9. See, *Constitution of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC)*, p.1.
10. See, *The Nation News Paper*, Friday, October 21, 2011, p.35.
11. *Constitution of NIREC*, pp.3-4.
12. *Ibid*, pp.5-8.
13. *Ibid*, p.4.
14. See the Address delivered by his Excellency, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu at the Inauguration of Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) Lagos State Chapter on Thursday 21st September, 2006, p.1.
15. It needs to be informed that the membership composition of the Council from the Muslim Community was drawn on the basis of the five divisional entities in the state and representation each from Muslim Organisations and women group. At the inception of the Council, the following personalities were nominated: Dr. Saheed Timehin, Co-Chairman representing Epe division; Dr. T.O. Bawallah – Ikorodu division; Alh. Shakirudeen Abdul Gafar – Lagos division; Alh. Ibraheem Sharafadeen – Ikeja division; Alh. S.A.O. Muideen – Badagry division; Alh. Abdul Rahman Ahmad – National Missioner, Ansar ud-Deen Society of Nigeria and Alhaja Lateefat Okunnu representing the Muslim Women group. In the same vein, the

Christian component of the council membership cut across different affiliations of the Christian Community in the state. Thus, Rev. Monsignor B.A. Okodua, a Co-Chairman and Bishop Amu represented the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN); Rev. Monsignor John Aniagwu – Catholic; Very Rev. (Dr.) Yinka Omolola – Anglican; Apostle J.O. Akinwusi, CPPN/PEN (The Apos.); Rev. J.B. Odofin – ECWA/TECAN; Primate N. Akindele – OAIC.

16. Information obtained from an interview with Dr. Said Timehin, a Co-Chairman of NIREC, Lagos State Chapter on 26th March, 2014.
17. Cases treated in the Council are categorized into: Relationship, Boundary/Land, Public Nuisance, Fiery Preaching and Forced initiation into another religion. Cases that are already in the court are not accepted.
18. Personal communication with Dr. Said Timehin, Co-Chairman of NIREC Lagos State on 27 March, 2014.
19. *Ibid.*
20. Arbitrations so far made cover boundary/lands issues, public nuisance, fiery preaching, relationship, intra-religions tolerance. Far reaching effect has been witnessed in land issues and relationship.
21. Information contained in the minutes of the Nigeria Inter-Religious Council (NIREC) meeting held on Wednesday 5th September, 2007.
22. Information extracted from the minutes of NIREC meeting held on 27th June, 2010.
23. Information obtained from the Minutes NIREC meeting held on 4th June, 2008.
24. Information contained in the minutes of NIREC meeting held on 8th January, 2010.
25. Information obtained from the minutes of NIREC meeting held on 16th April, 2011.
26. This writer was a participant at the Inter Faith Conference. Based on the achievements of the conference, the Lagos State government called for another edition, in which this writer is a member of the planning committee.
27. Example of such functions are: Nigeria's Independence Day Celebration, Armed Forces Remembrance Day, First *Tarawih* Prayers, *Laylat-ul Quadr* (Night of Majesty), *Eid el-Fitr*, *Eid al-Kabir*, Carol Service, Annual Thanksgiving Prayers etc. In addition to hosting these ceremonies, the State Government supports and encourages citizens towards the fulfillment of their religious duties by donating food items to religious leaders, individuals and organizations during Ramadan and Lenten periods.