



## Murad continues his work at City Hall

I was delighted to be re-elected for a second term as a London Assembly Member in May, having first been elected to the Assembly in 2004. This term, I will continue my work on the Assembly's Environment and Transport Committees and have been selected as a member of the Budget and Standards Committees.

I am also pleased that the mayor has agreed that the London Waterways Commission should continue with myself as chair.



Murad at City Hall

I will continue to scrutinise the work of the mayor while working for and with Londoners across the city until the next London elections take place in 2012.

## Murad promotes real markets

With all the focus recently on the crisis in the financial markets, we should not neglect our markets in the real economy, which are often the hub of our urban communities.

So I was pleased to be invited to chair the London Markets Symposium at City Hall on 23 October, which aimed to raise awareness of the economic and social importance of wholesale and street markets across the capital.

The Symposium highlighted the vital role that our markets play in the provision of London's food, with an ever-increasing and more diverse population, and their significance in relation to health, environmental and sustainability issues.

We had a range of speakers representing the various interests within the network of wholesale and street markets of London, including the new chair of London Food, Rosie Boycott.

The re-launch of the Association of London Markets (AOLM) at the meeting will hopefully make a major contribution to raising the profile of this often neglected but genuine retail choice – and, as the economy enters a downturn, help win customers away from the supermarkets.



Murad with Rosie Boycott at the London Markets Symposium

## Embassies must pay the Congestion Charge

It remains a continuing scandal that, nearly six years after it was first introduced, many embassies in London are still refusing to pay the Congestion Charge. Their justification for this stance – that the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations frees them from the obligation to pay taxes – is an entirely spurious argument, since the CC clearly qualifies as a user charge rather than a tax. Refusing to pay it is no different from refusing to pay the charge for crossing a toll bridge, for example, and no embassy anywhere is claiming they are exempt from that.

The precise cost of this Congestion Charge evasion to Londoners was unclear, so I tabled a question at Mayor's Question Time in November asking for a breakdown of the amounts owed by the various London embassies. The report, supplied by Transport for London, contains some shocking statistics.

Top of the non-payment league is the US embassy. Its diplomats have driven through the Congestion Charge Zone 26,165 times without paying. The embassy owes £209,320 in unpaid charges

and £2,735,245 in unpaid fines.

The total figures for money owed by payment-dodging embassies are even more eye-watering. Altogether, diplomatic staff have made 220,540 journeys through the CCZ without paying, resulting in £1,764,320 in unpaid charges and £23,120,389 in unpaid fines.

This situation is totally unacceptable. It is not for embassies to pick and choose which rules they obey and which they don't. While we are belt-tightening during these difficult economic times, Londoners are having to carry these freeriding diplomats on their backs.

As a London Assembly Member I will do my best to ensure that the Mayor puts the maximum pressure on embassies to accept their obligations, start paying the Congestion Charge and clear their outstanding debts.



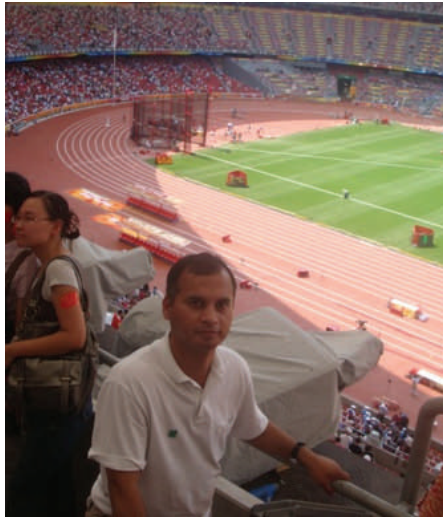
## Murad says back Twenty20 for 2012

**W**hen I attended the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing during my summer holidays, in addition to enjoying this spectacular celebration of sporting achievement one of my objectives was to lobby the International Olympic Committee over the inclusion of Twenty20 Cricket at the London Olympics in 2012.

My proposal is that Twenty20 Cricket should be featured as a 'showcase' sport along the same lines as the Chinese national sport of Wushu at the Beijing games. The 'Twenty20 for 2012' campaign has received the enthusiastic support of a wide range of sports personalities and other prominent figures in public life.

At November's London Assembly, which heard a progress report from the London

Organising Committee of the Olympic Games, I moved a successful resolution committing the Assembly to back the inclusion of Twenty20 in the 2012 games.



Murad at the Olympic Games in Beijing

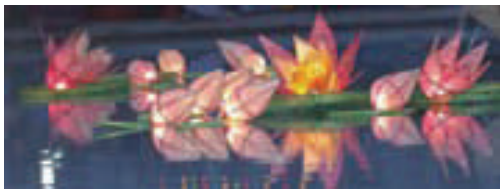
## Global Peace & Unity Event

**T**he annual Global Peace & Unity Event, which took place at the Excel Centre in east London over the weekend of 25-26 October, is by far the largest Muslim convention in the west, attracting an audience of 40,000 and a wide range of speakers from across the world.

I chaired an interesting and productive session on the vital issue of 'How to create democratic political change', with a platform that included the Pakistani politician and former cricketer Imran Khan, Sam Tarry of Compass Youth and Asghar Bukhari from the Muslim Public Affairs Committee.



## Celebrating diversity: Diwali on the Square



Floating Diwali lanterns in Trafalgar Square

**T**ogether with my fellow Assembly Member, Navin Shah, I attended the celebrations to mark Diwali, the Festival of Lights, organised by the Diwali in London Committee and the Greater London Authority. Diwali is a major festival not only for the Hindu community but also for Sikhs and Jains, and on Sunday 19 October around 25,000 people packed Trafalgar Square for this event.

The ability of people from disparate backgrounds to live together in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect is one of London's great strengths, and our city stands as model of successful community relations for the whole world. As an Assembly Member I will work to ensure that the Greater London Authority continues to promote diversity and multiculturalism in association with representative organisations from minority communities.

## Saving energy and reducing fuel poverty

**A**long with other members of the London Assembly Environment Committee, I visited Kirklees in West Yorkshire in October to study their successful implementation of the government's 'Warm Zone' initiative, which is designed to systematically reduce fuel poverty and improve domestic energy efficiency.

The Kirklees Warm Zone was set up in April 2007 to offer free loft and cavity wall insulation to every suitable home, with the aim of eliminating fuel poverty in all households.

The Kirklees scheme has been particularly successful in encouraging take-up, and the Committee wants to see its achievements replicated in London.



## Contact me...

If you would like to raise an issue about life in London or invite me



to your local group or campaign meeting then please do get in touch via:

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