

# Celebrating Mawlid in Multi-racial society

By Salim Osman

**W**E celebrate birthdays our own and that of our loved ones. But how do we celebrate the birthday of our beloved Prophet Muhammad, the seal of prophets and the messenger of Islam?

It is generally said that on this auspicious day of Rabiul Awal, Muslims all around the world send their blessings to the Prophet Muhammad saw (peace be upon him). These blessings are in the form of the salawat (salutations) reading of the sirah (his life history), qasidah (poetry) and other forms of recitations.

Some scholars say that mawlid gatherings are also an effective and efficient means for the purpose of calling people to Islam and to educate children that these meetings give a golden opportunity that must not be lost.

To celebrate the mawlid is to celebrate our beloved and noble Prophet, may Allah bless his soul and grant him peace, and this in itself is a good reminder for the community of his good character, his way of worshipping and his way of treating people. This is also a way to make children love and remember their Prophet. The celebrations are held both at the mosques as well as in the homes of Muslims. The spirit of mawlid carries

through for an entire month, not just during the 12th day of Rabiul Awwal.

In a multi-racial society such as Singapore's, there is a need to explain the significance of the celebration and the differences in the way Muslims observe the event as compared to the way fellow Singaporeans from other faiths celebrate theirs.

It has to be pointed out that the event is commemorated to remind Muslims of the prophet's achievements and of the great Islamic way of life that they have inherited from his coming. What usually happens on the day of his birth is that some parts of the life of the Prophet are related, the Quran is recited and food is offered to the needy.

All sorts of behaviour that are Islamically reprehensible are avoided.

Those who say that commemorating the Prophet's birthday is a bid'ah or innovation which is not acceptable are influenced by the bad behaviour that took place when people danced in the streets, mixed freely with the opposite sex. That is the part which is not acceptable.

For Muslims in Singapore and elsewhere in Southeast Asia, mawlid gatherings go on for the entire year although the feeling is stronger during the fourth month of the Islamic calendar, Rabiul Awal.

They are held during births of children and at