

Saudi's Fatin to attend women's empowerment conference in US

Habib Shaikh (From our correspondent)

16 November 2006

JEDDAH — A Saudi woman, Fatin Bundagji, founder of the women's section and director of the women's empowerment and research centre at the Jeddah Chamber of Commerce and Industry (JCCI), is to attend a gathering of more than a 100 Muslim women human rights activists, scholars, religious leaders, and artists from around the world in New York City on November 17.

The meeting aims at launching the Women's Islamic Initiative in Spirituality and Equity to empower Muslim women (Wise), believed to be the first of its kind at this level. "The conference is a very important event as it comes at a time when networking among Muslim women all over the world has become a necessity and a survival strategy," said Fatin.

Fatin will participate as a speaker on a panel that will talk about women empowering women. According to her, these days Islam is attacked and depicted in an alarming way both in the West and the East. Even Muslims have been led away from the teachings of Islam that truly promote the dignity and freedom of humanity.

Explaining the reasons behind her participation, she said Saudi Arabia is known as the leading nation of the Islamic Ummah therefore a Saudi voice has to be there. "I believe that my participation is a national duty," she said.

Daisy Khan, Executive Director of the American Society for Muslim Advancement (Asma), and chief organiser of the event described it as a historical and crucial one in the history of Islam. "Wise will provide a much-needed platform for diverse Muslim women to discuss global Muslim women's issues, assert our rights through the use of and in accordance with Islamic law, and build a coherent movement that empowers and connects Muslim women everywhere," she said.

Top Muslim women leaders expected to attend include Baroness Uddin, the first Muslim woman to enter the British House of Lords, Dr Nafis Sadik, Special Adviser to the United Nations Secretary-General, Massouda Jalal, Afghan Presidential candidate, Nogi Imoukhuede Nigerian advocate in the Amina Lawal stoning case, Ingrid Mattson, President of Islamic Society of North America, Rima Khoreibi, comedy writer of Dubai who introduced the Muslim World to their first female heroin and Mukhtaran Mai of Pakistan, author of the much-anticipated book *In the Name of Honour: A Memoir*.