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## Press Release

For more information, call:  
Mr Dilip Joshi MBE, T: 0774 505 8387  
[dilip.joshi@btopenworld.com](mailto:dilip.joshi@btopenworld.com)

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### **Re-appointments in Public Sector discriminating against British Asians**

***An excessive number of re-appointments in the UK Public Sector are preventing Asians, other ethnic minorities, women and the disabled from getting their first public appointment claims HCUK.***

The Hindu Council UK (HCUK), a representative body for Britain's 1.5 million Hindus, has today published a list of Re-Appointments in the Public Sector in the past year showing that the majority of UK's NDPBs (Non-Departmental Public Bodies) are re-appointing board directors far too frequently; paying them too much and signing them up for far too long. The list, comprising 230 individuals re-appointed in the past year (from 1 September 2008 onwards) totals in excess of £10 million in salaries. HCUK claims this practice is preventing highly-qualified, skilled and experienced Asians from obtaining their first public sector role.

Compiled from desk research, HCUK claims that this represents only the "tip of the iceberg" – the published information (usually for Board level directors, Chairs and Deputy Chairs) where available - with appointments to sub-committees and new appointments excluded from the list. A public appointment is an appointment to the board of a public body. In the UK there are currently 18,500 public appointments to over 1,200 UK public bodies according to figures published by the Government's Equality Office.

Although the majority of public appointments claim to comply with OCPA (Office of the Commissioner of Public Appointments) procedure, re-appointments are often perceived as a "cosy" arrangement with tacit acknowledgement of previous work done rather than the more rigorous application, selection and interview process that external candidate's face.

"Clearly, continuity of experience on a board is valuable for an organisation to progress" said Dilip Joshi, HCUK Public Appointments Taskforce representative, "but where you have more than half the committee being re-appointed, as in the case of the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) last year, at a cost of £2.5 million to the British Taxpayer, it is clearly out of control".

Hindu Council UK, Community Hall, Shri Venkateswara (Balaji) Temple, Dudley Road East Birmingham B69 3DU

Tel: +(44/0) 121 552 3549 Fax: +(44/0) 121 544 2257



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HCUK representatives have already met with the Government's Equalities Office (GEO) and representatives from the Cabinet Office and other departments. HCUK has also published its UK Public Appointments Strategy that identifies several key factors to ensuring equality in the Public Sector. Among the recommendations are:

- A "one term" rule for appointments to a Public Body. As most public appointments are for 3 to 4 years at a time, this would open up opportunities for "new blood" and new skills, benefiting women, the disabled and ethnic minorities.
- A complete stop of all 5-year appointments.
- A limit on public appointments positions that an individual can hold to a maximum of two roles concurrently.
- Legislation to bring all Public Sector appointments under the regulation of the OCPA (rather than the current level of 30% of appointments).
- "Fast Tracking" of applications from under-represented sectors to interview stage to overcome barriers created by the applications process.
- Use of OCPA-accredited Independent Assessors for public appointments' interviews to be mandatory
- Diversity training workshops to be mandatory for boards of public bodies
- Closer scrutiny of public appointments, job descriptions (role definitions) and re-appointments with quarterly production of statistics

The publication of the HCUK Public Re-Appointments list is the first of a series of initiatives planned by the organisation in the coming year – the aim being to highlight the inequalities in procedures and provide constructive suggestions. In addition, HCUK is developing its own candidate's database providing coaching and interview skills for suitable individuals: developing diversity workshops for organisation, building relationships with public sector recruitment agencies, creating a mentoring scheme and actively pursuing partnerships with other organisations.



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“The Equality Bill was devised to help create greater fairness and equality. Between June and October 2009, HCUK carried a pilot programme to try to get a Hindu candidate into one of six bodies: the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the Arts Council London, the Women's National Commission (WNC), an NHS Trust, a Business Development Agency and the Thames Gateway. Candidates put forward were highly qualified, skilled, experienced, articulate, confident individuals with previous board level experience. We are sorry to report that we failed to make any headway – some did not even make the long list”, added Dilip Joshi.

“Something is going wrong in the process – whether it is through a recruitment agency or directly – Hindus are struggling to even get a foot in the door. The executive public sector “job squatting” is just one of the reasons. If we can start to remove some of these barriers, then Hindu candidates are available – there is no shortage”.

Given the propensity to higher education and cultural emphasis on professional careers, statistics show that Hindus have better qualifications than the average UK population. “We have more qualified doctors, dentists, pharmacists, accountants and lawyers on average, so one could argue that we should be seeing a greater profile of Hindus in the Public Sector, not less as is currently the case”, ended Dilip Joshi.

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### **About the Hindu Council UK**

Hindu Council UK was founded in 1994 for all Hindus domiciled in the United Kingdom, combining all the Hindu faith denominations, whilst representing various Hindu communities and Hindus from different parts of the world settled in the United Kingdom. It's main purpose was to give the UK Hindus an effective voice on policy matters with the Government of the day whilst enhancing mutual understanding among the major faiths predominant in the UK. Hindu Council UK is itself a non-partisan faith organisation.