

Row over Bengali Bonfire Night

Digest

By Ben Quinn

PLANS by a local authority to celebrate Bonfire Night with a show based on a Bengali folk tale were criticised yesterday.

Tower Hamlets council was accused of pandering to political correctness by organising the £75,000 event without Guy Fawkes or bonfire. Instead, it will retell a story about an emperor and his tax

collectors. Entitled *The Emperor and the Tiger*, Sunday's event will involve a mechanical tiger as well as drummers and dancers.

It is being produced by a Manchester arts charity, Walk the Plank. Liz Pugh, a producer with the company, said a similar piece had been commissioned in the summer.

"It was so well received that it was decided to give it another outing," she said, adding that Bonfire Night was an anti-Catholic celebration involving the burning in effigy of Guy Fawkes, a Catholic. "We no longer want to be

involved in that." However, John Midgley, a spokesman for the Campaign Against Political Correctness, said the council's decision would "explode in their faces".

He added: "It is time for common sense and for people to tell bureaucrats that politically correct actions like these undermine our historic occasions and harm community relations."

A spokesman for the council said: "It is utter nonsense to suggest the council has banned Guy Fawkes or is acting politically correctly in relation to Bonfire Night."

Weekend jails ended despite full prisons

The Home Office has scrapped a key plank of Labour's penal reform strategy less than two years after its introduction.

Despite jails being full, "weekend prisons", which let offenders keep their jobs and see their families in the week, were not being used sufficiently to justify their cost. **P2**

Public sector pay bonanza

The richest public servants received pay rises of twice the national average, with three earning £1 million or more. **P4**

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