



## President of Turkey lectures on 'The Islamic World, Democracy, and Development'

The President of the Republic of Turkey, HE Mr Abdullah Gül, was the Centre's Distinguished Visiting Lecturer in Michaelmas term. His Excellency delivered a lecture on 'The Islamic World, Democracy, and Development' to a capacity audience in the Examination Schools, Oxford.

President Gül stated that it was necessary to break the Islamic world's current 'deep-rooted alienation' from democracy and development, which existed despite what he termed 'the true credentials of Islamic tradition' in precisely those areas. Today democracy, human rights, good governance, and accountability were, he said, no longer a luxury but a necessity for globalization. 'We must aim at finding common ground', he concluded. In initiating dialogue with those of different faiths, 'we may easily find that some of what we hear actually is already within us.'

President Gül then answered questions from the audience on a wide range of topics, including the possibility of Turkey hosting talks with Iran in order to move towards a diplomatic solution to the dispute over Tehran's nuclear programme. As world power shifts eastwards, he said, the EU would find a growing necessity to ad-



*HE The President lectures at the Examination Schools*

mit Turkey as a member-state, owing to its strategic geographic and economic position between Europe and Asia.

Following the lecture, the Centre hosted a dinner in the President's honour at Rhodes House. It was attended by members of Parliament and the diplomatic corps, Heads of House, and other senior members of the University.

## 'Al-Mizan: Sciences and Arts in the Islamic World'



*Fifteenth-century Islamic spherical astrolabe*

To mark the Centre's twenty-fifth anniversary, the Vice-Chancellor inaugurated a special exhibition which the

Centre staged in collaboration with Oxford's Museum of the History of Science.

The purpose of the exhibition, titled 'Al-Mizan', is to explore the connections between the sciences and arts in early Muslim societies. It concentrates on the manner in which craftsmen combined scientific inquiry and artistic beauty to create a range of sophisticated instruments that are both attractive and functional. To do so the exhibition gathers together pieces not only from the museum's own extensive collection of scientific apparatus, but also items from other important collections in the Ashmolean Museum, the Bodleian Library, the Khalili collection, and the British Museum.

The exhibition, which runs from October through March, is accompanied by a series of public lectures, table talks, workshops, tours, and other events.

## Visiting Fellowships

Two Chevening Visiting Fellowships have been awarded during the current academic year:

**Mr Nazir Razak** is the CEO of CIMB Group, Kuala Lumpur. His research interests are in Asian business, specifically Malaysian, Sharia-compliant finance and banking.

**Mr Ismail Cebeci**, from Marmara University, Istanbul, is conducting research in the fields of Islamic law and finance, specifically *fiqh al-muamalat*, transaction types in Islamic economics, *fatwa* in modern *muamalat*, and Ottoman *fatwas*.

Other Visiting Research Fellowships have been awarded to the following:

**Dr Fayza Akhdar** is General Director at the Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia. Her research interests concern education in Saudi Arabia.

**Professor Scott Morrison**, Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Zayed University, Dubai, is the Muhammad bin Ladin Visiting Fellow. His research interests are in Islamic law in the Maldives, from 1796 to 1965.

**Dr Aasim Illyas Padela**, from the Robert Wood Johnson Clinical Scholars Program, University of Michigan, is currently conducting research on Islamic bioethical deliberation. This entails an examination of epistemology and theological challenges for Islamic biomedical ethics.

## International Contacts

### Morocco

The Moroccan Ambassador to the UK, HH Princess Lalla Joumala Alaoui, visited the Centre in November. Following a tour of the Centre's new building, a lunch was given in her honour at the Centre, attended by members of the University and Centre Fellows. Her Highness met with the Director to explore ways in which Morocco could contribute to the Centre's activities.



*HH Princess Lalla Joumala signing the visitors' book*

### Kazakhstan

In October a delegation from the R. B. Suleimenov Institute of Oriental Studies visited the Centre to sign a Memorandum of Understanding. The delegation, led by Professor Meruert Kh. Abusseitova, agreed to implement research projects of mutual interest with the Centre, in particular creating and sharing important digital copies of archival materials between Kazakhstan and the UK.



*Prof. Abusseitova exchanges the Memorandum of Understanding with the Director*

### Malaysia

In Michaelmas HRH Sultana Raja Zarith Sofia visited the Centre, during which time she inspected the Centre's new building accompanied by several members of her family. Her Royal Highness was introduced to the Centre's academic activities, and discussed potential areas of collaboration with academic institutions in Malaysia. Her Royal Highness is Chancellor of University Technology Malaysia.



*HRH Sultana Raja Zarith Sofia at the new building*

### Turkey

The Ambassador of the Republic of Turkey to the UK, HE Mr Ünal Çeviköz, visited the Centre in September. His Excellency was accompanied by a delegation from the Turkish Embassy in London, which received a briefing on the Centre's activities. They visited the Centre's new building, including the Istanbul Courtyard under construction.



*HE Mr Çeviköz at the new building*

## HRH Princess Basma visits the Centre



*HRH Princess Basma bint Talal with the Director*

In November the Centre was pleased to welcome HRH Princess Basma bint Talal of Jordan to Oxford. After inspecting work on the new building and signing the Distinguished Visitors' Book, Her Royal Highness attended a lunch hosted in her honour at the Centre and met with Centre Fellows.

During her visit she expressed admiration and support for the Centre's work, as well as a desire for further collaboration between Jordan and the Centre, most particularly in areas related to Islam and the environment. Princess Basma holds a doctorate from Oxford University.



# Centre marks 40th Anniversary of the Accession of HM Sultan Qaboos

This autumn the Centre marked the fortieth anniversary of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said's accession to the Throne of Oman.

The Secretary General of the Foreign Ministry of Oman, HE Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Albusaidi, was invited to the Centre in October. During his visit, His Excellency conducted a seminar on the subject of 'International Relations in the Era of a New Asia'. He described the Omani perception of the China's and India's influence within both the immediate region and the global economy.

During the course of his talk, His Excellency described Oman's stance on the rise of Asia as being largely benign and welcoming, and encouraged Western governments to acknowledge other countries' views in this regard when formulating policy.

The seminar was attended by scholars from Oxford University and other institutions, who shared their perspectives on a broad range of related topics.

The Secretary General was accompanied by HE Mr Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Hinai, the ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the UK. During their visit they inspected the new building and discussed areas of mutual interest between Oman and the Centre.

HE Dr Rawya Saud Al Busaidi, Minister of Higher Education for the Sultanate of Oman,



*HE Sayyid Badr Albusaidi signing the visitors' book*

invited the Director and the Centre's Sultan of Oman Fellow, Professor Francis Robinson, to attend a symposium in Muscat, titled 'The Academic Chairs of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos and their Contribution to the Development of Human Knowledge'.

The symposium, which took place in November, focused on the fourteen academic posts that have been endowed by HM Sultan Qaboos in institutions around the world. These posts address subjects within the fields of Oriental studies, international relations, applied sciences, and human-resource development.

## Higher Education Academy Workshop on Islamic Studies

In December the Centre hosted a Regional Workshop on the teaching of Islamic studies in the south of England.

Organized in conjunction with the Higher Education Academy's Islamic Studies Network, the day-long workshop focused on current teaching and research, as well as cross-disciplinary collaboration within Islamic studies. Professor Francis Robinson (OCIS) gave the opening address.

The morning session, chaired by Professor M. A. S. Abdel Haleem (SOAS), offered participants the opportunity to share their teaching materials and course or module outlines. After lunch, a panel discussion chaired by Dr Carool Kersten (King's College London) and Dr Mohammed Talib (OCIS) explored ways in which different academic fields could be combined to enhance approaches to teaching Islamic studies.

## Centre Fellow appointed as a Privy Councillor

Dr Afifi Al-Akiti, KFAS Fellow in Islamic Studies and Islamic Centre Lecturer in the Faculty of Theology, has been appointed as a Privy Councillor to the State of Perak, Malaysia.

The Council's duties include advising on the exercise of prerogative powers assigned to its constitutional monarch, the Sultan of Perak, in matters pertaining to Islamic and Malay custom.

## Seminars series on Islam and geography

The Centre held a series of seminars during Michaelmas Term, in honour of Dr David Browning, OCIS Registrar, who recently retired (see OCIS News no. 54). These seminars took as their starting point Dr Browning's distinguished career as a geographer at Oxford University, and focused on placing various aspects of Islamic culture in a geographical context.

Seminar speakers included Professor Maria Logrono (Florida International University) on 'Being Muslim in Latin America'; Professor Paulo Pinto (Fluminense Federal University, Rio de Janeiro) on 'Muslims in South America:

The Case of Brazil'; and Dr Emma Clark (The Prince's School of Traditional Arts) on 'The Islamic Garden: An Opportunity for Bridge-Building between Cultures'.

Dr Mona Hassan (Duke University) spoke on 'Recalling Baghdad's Sacred Geography'; Professor Diarmaid MacCulloch (St Cross College, Oxford) on 'Christianity and Islam: Way-Stations on a Journey'; Dr Sophie Gilliat-Ray (Cardiff University) on 'Muslims in Britain: Past, Present, and Future'; and Lieutenant Commander (Ret'd) Gavin Menzies (London) on 'Did Zheng He Map the World by 1418?'.

The latest issue of the *Journal of Islamic Studies* contains articles by Hodaya Ziad on 'Poetry, Music and the Muhammadi Path: How Khvājah Mir Dard Brought Three Worlds Together in 18th-Century Delhi'; Salah Hussein Al-Houdalieh on 'Visitation and Making Vows at the Shrine of Shaykh Shihab Al-Din'; and Greg Simons on 'Fourth Generation Warfare and the Clash of Civilizations'.

The issue also contains 26 book reviews of some of the most important recent publications about Islam and the Muslim world.

## Dean of the Diplomatic Corps hosts Reception to mark the Centre's 25th Anniversary

In November the Kuwait Ambassador to the UK, HE Mr Khaled Al-Duwaisan, KCVO, CBE, hosted a reception at the Royal Society in London to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the foundation of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. In his welcoming address, the Ambassador praised the Centre's remarkable growth and academic reach, which he described as being increasingly vital in order to build bridges and defuse tensions between different cultures and faiths.

In his reply, the Director thanked those present for their steadfast support throughout the Centre's formative years. He added that although an anniversary of only a quarter-century might appear small by Oxford standards, those years had served to place the Centre on a solid foundation from which its work could flourish.

The reception was attended by representatives of the diplomatic corps, as well as by



HE Mr Khaled Al-Duwaisan

ministers and MPs, senior members of the Foreign and Commonwealth office, and Heads of Oxford colleges and other academic institutions.