



The Prime Minister of Malaysia lectures on The Challenge of Good Governance in the Muslim World



Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad

On 24 September Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Prime Minister of Malaysia, lectured at the Centre on 'The Challenge of Good Governance in the Muslim World'. A long-standing friend and supporter of the Centre, it was Dr Mahathir's sixth visit and second Distinguished Lecture (the first being in 1996). It was also his first major lecture in the West since returning as Prime Minister last May. The lecture, held in the Malaysia Auditorium, was attended by senior members of the University and representatives from many diplomatic missions. The talk

was also video-streamed into two other lecture spaces to accommodate all those wishing to attend.

In his lecture, Dr Mahathir provided an historical overview of governance in Islamic countries. He noted that democracy has developed in Western countries over centuries and it was unrealistic to expect that Muslim countries can adopt it overnight. The strength of a democratic system rests on the appreciation within the electorate of the importance of universal suffrage. Each vote counts and hence every voter has an individual responsibility to participate in the electoral process. Societies need time and patience to transition from feudal and traditional rule to systems of governance based on participation and accountability. Overthrowing one system does not immediately lead to the successful establishment of another. Following the lecture, Dr Mahathir answered questions on the impact of technology (including social media) on politics, the interaction of customs with religion and the importance of knowledge exchange and educational links between countries.

The vote of thanks was proposed by Mr Richard Graham MP, the Prime Minister's Trade Envoy to ASEAN and Chairman of the Westminster Foundation for Democracy.

Centre's Academic Progress Reviewed International Links Reinforced

The International Academic Advisory Committee met in May to discuss the Centre's academic priorities as it settles into its new premises. On this occasion, the Committee reviewed the development of Centre's visiting fellowship programmes, scholarship schemes for students, research, and publication projects. Possibilities of further international partnerships with foundations, universities, and other academic institutions were explored. The remit of the committee is to set the Centre's academic work and programmes in an international context and to assist the Centre in developing its international outreach. An important focus is the promotion of dialogue and cooperation between scholars from different academic and cultural traditions.



Members of the International Academic Advisory Committee at the Centre in May 2018

Centre launches School Educational Visits Programme

The Centre launched its School Educational Visits Programme in February 2018. The programme provides an enriching out-of-classroom learning experience for children who are studying Islam as part of the Religious Education curriculum. Teachers and students are given a guided tour of the Centre's buildings, gardens, and the Mosque. This is followed by an interactive presentation on Islamic faith and civilization tailored to the specific curriculum objectives of a visiting group. Ms Caroline O'Connor, a qualified and experienced local teacher, leads this programme in consultation with the Centre's Imam, Mr Ibrahim Amin.

The programme continues to grow in popularity and several local and regional schools, both primary and secondary, have already benefitted from it.

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It contains articles by Mustafa Karagözoğlu: "Contested Avenues in Post-Classical Hadith Criticism: A Reading through the Lens of al-Mughnī 'an al-ḥifẓ wa-l-kitāb", Khalil Andani: "The Merits of the Bāṭiniyya: Al-Ghazālī's Appropriation of Isma'īli Cosmology", and Kathleen M. Foody on "Muslims in the American Media: From Texts to Affects".

International contacts

UAE

The Centre was represented at discussions at the Beirut Institute Summit meeting in Abu Dhabi in the summer. The Summit is a collaborative initiative which brings together political leaders, senior policy makers, leading CEOs and civil society leaders to discuss and design actionable policies to advance the construction of the Arab region's engagement in the emerging global future. It aims to create a multi-disciplinary, multi-sector and intergenerational platform for collaboration.

Indonesia

In August the Director attended the 7th World Peace Forum in Jakarta organised around the theme 'The Middle Path for World Civilization'. Delegates from 43 countries were welcomed by the Special Envoy to the President for Interfaith and Inter-civilizational Dialogue and Cooperation, Professor M. Din Syamsuddin. Discussions focussed on matters related to religion, national ideology, economics, politics and culture.



Switzerland

The Centre participated in the 2018 World Conference on 'Religions, Creeds and Value Systems: Joining Forces to Enhance Equal Citizenship Rights' organized by the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue.



The conference was held in June under the patronage of HRH Prince El Hassan bin Talal of Jordan.

Canada

Mr Ian Shugart, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Canada, visited the Centre in June. Having toured the premises and met with senior members of the Centre, Mr Shugart discussed ways to further develop the Centre's links with Canadian academic institutions.



Mr Shugart, Deputy Foreign Minister with the Director

10th anniversary of Khazanah-OCIS Scholarship Programme Celebrating the Merdeka Scholarships

In July the Centre and Yayasan Khazanah celebrated the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the Khazanah-OCIS Scholarship Programme. The 'Merdeka Scholarships' were established to mark the 50th anniversary of Malaysia's independence and are intended to enable outstanding Malaysian students to undertake postgraduate study at the University. Subject areas may be drawn from a range of fields and candidates should have an excellent record of academic achievement and a proven capability for independent research. Since 2008 the programme has provided full scholarship grants to 28 students. Guests at the reception (held in Kuala Lumpur) to celebrate the work



His Majesty Sultan Muhammad V and HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah at the presentation in Kuala Lumpur

included His Majesty Sultan Muhammad V, HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah, the Minister of Education, and representatives from Khazanah and the Centre along with many Merdeka scholarship alumni.

The Rt Hon Alistair Burt lectures on Making a Difference in the Middle East



The Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP

The Rt Hon Alistair Burt MP gave a lecture at the Centre on 20 July. He is the Minister of State responsible for UK relations with the Middle East, appointed to both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Department for International Development. He took as his title: Making a Difference in the Middle East: UK Objectives. Students

and senior academics enjoyed an expert survey of the challenges facing the region. In a substantial question and answer session, many questions focussed on the region's unresolved conflicts, notably in Syria and Libya, and relationships in the Gulf, notably with Iran. Concern was also expressed to promote progress on Palestine, and avert humanitarian crisis in Gaza, concerns which Mr Burt said the Government fully shared. The Minister was also asked about the implications of wider international engagement in the region, particularly by the United States and Russia and the role of Europe, as well as the practical benefits of bringing together the political and development portfolios for the region.

The following Seminars were organized during Trinity Term:

Dr Peter Clark (SOAS), 'Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall: Qur'an Translator and Novelist'.

Dr James Frankel (*Chinese University of Hong Kong*), 'Recognising the True Lord: A Confucian approach to Islamic theology in the writings of the Chinese Muslim scholar Liu Zhi'.

Professor Jakob Skovgaard-Peterson (*Copenhagen*), 'Al Azhar and the Ulama'.

Professor Ros Ballaster (*Oxford*), 'Speculative Men: Thinking Analogically about Islam and Christain Sectarianism in seventeenth and eighteenth Century England'.

Professor Eugene Rogan (*Oxford*), '1918: The Fall of the Ottomans and the Beginning of a Century of Conflict'.

Dr Joo-Yup Lee (*Toronto*), 'The Formation of a Turco-Islamic World Region in and around the Qipchaq steppe in the early Modern Age'.

Dr Rafaqat Rashid (*Al Balagh Academy*), 'The Intersection between Science, Philosophy, and the Islamic Theological and Legal Discourse in Medically Defining Death'.

Young Leaders meet at the Centre Annual Leadership Programme

The thirteenth annual Young Muslim Leadership Programme (a joint initiative of the Centre and The Prince's Charities) was held in early July. The programme brings together 25 British Muslims aged between 21 and 30 to Oxford for an intensive residential leadership course. This year's cohort included participants who work in the civil service, medicine, the charity sector, consultancy, law, business, teaching and a local councillor.

The participants attended lectures, seminars and workshops led by a variety of speakers from all parts of public life. Guest speakers included Ms Layla Moran MP, Baroness Chakrabarti, Sir Ciaran Devane (Chief Executive of The British Council) and Imran Madden (Chief Executive of the Islamic Relief), and Alexander Desforges (Press Secretary to the Archbishop of Westminster). The 2018 cohort now join an active network of 250 YMPLP alumni.

Joint conference with the Atlantic Council Human Rights and the Islamic tradition

In May, the Atlantic Council's Rafik Hariri Centre held a conference jointly with the Centre on the subject of Islam, Human Rights and Muslim Communities. The one-day conference took place as part of a larger Carnegie Endowment funded project and engaged religious scholars ('ulama), academics and practitioners for a frank private, discussion on the relationship between the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Islamic tradition. The theme of 'theoretical considerations'

noted Islam's own historical tradition of acknowledging human dignity in terms of "duties" or "responsibilities" rather than "rights" and that the Islamic perspective could enrich the global conversation on human rights. A second theme revolved around practical challenges including women's rights and the role of Islam in modern medicine. The final theme looked at regional cases – different perspectives included the Malaysian experience and the rise of Islamophobia in the United States.

Tun Mahathir Research Fellow appointed

Muhammad Meki joined the Centre in Trinity Term as the Mahathir Mohamad Research Fellow. His research interests are focused on the effect of equity-like (Musharakah-based) microfinance contracts and the investment and growth of microenterprises in developing countries.



Muhammad Meki

He is also the Rokos Research Fellow in Development Economics at Pembroke College, Oxford.

International Forum on Peace in Revealed Religions

In May the Centre hosted a two-day forum, in partnership with the Muslim World League (Makkah), exploring the value of peace in Abrahamic faiths, as part of its commitment to improve understanding between different cultural, religious, and intellectual traditions. The forum opened with a session in which eminent scholars and faith leaders from various faith traditions outlined frameworks from their specific faith perspectives for positive inter- and intra-faith tolerance and peace between and among religious adherents. It was followed by three plenary sessions dedicated to eliciting a deeper understanding from a diverse range of faith perspectives regarding peace, tolerance and good society.

The Centre was pleased to welcome many senior participants including: HE Dr Mohammad ibn Abdulkarim Al-Issa (Secretary General of the Muslim World League); HE Shaikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah (President of the Forum for Promoting Peace



HE Dr Mohammad ibn Abdulkarim Al-Issa, HE Sheikh Abdallah Bin Bayyah and the Director at the Inaugural Session

in Muslim Societies) and HE Dr Faisal Bin Abdulrahman bin Muaammar (Secretary General of the King Abdullah International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Vienna). Representatives from other traditions included: Canon Dr Edmund Newell (Principal of Cumberland Lodge); the Most Reverend Archbishop Kevin McDonald (Emeritus Archbishop of Southwark & Chair of the Bishops' Conference Committee for Other Faiths) and Rabbi Professor Norman Solomon (Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies).

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