



## The King of Jordan Visits the Centre

In June His Majesty King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan received the degree of Doctor of Civil Law by Diploma from the University of Oxford. After the conclusion of this ceremony His Majesty visited the Centre.

Since its establishment the Centre has maintained links with scholars and institutions in Jordan. King Abdullah expressed the hope that these early contacts could be developed in ways that would enable and sustain future academic exchange and collaborative research.

His Majesty emphasized the importance of international outreach at a time when there is an urgent need in the global community for the cultivation of dialogue and mutual understanding between the Muslim and Western worlds.

Future cooperation with Jordan may also be considered with regard to teaching, research and publishing. Attention will be given to ways in which the Centre's Visiting Fellowship and Scholarship Programme can contribute to academic exchange with Jordan.

King Abdullah, together with HRH Prince Ghazi bin Muhammad, visited the academic and residential



*His Majesty King Abdullah and the Director*

facilities in the new building of the Centre in the company of the Director and Sir Hugo Brunner, Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire.

## Sultan of Oman Fellow Appointed

The appointment of Professor Francis Robinson, CBE, to the Sultan of Oman Fellowship, represents a major enhancement of the Centre's ability to advance teaching and research concerned with the history of Islamic civilization.



*Professor Francis Robinson, Sultan of Oman Fellow*

The encouragement of such teaching and research is the key purpose of this new post. As the first holder of the Sultan of Oman Fellowship, Francis Robinson is well qualified to serve this purpose. He has held the chair of History at

Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, and is a leading authority on the history of Muslim societies in South Asia. His publications include: *Atlas of the Islamic World Since 1500* (1982); *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia* (2000); *The Mughal Emperors* (2007); and *Islam, South Asia and the West* (2007).

Professor Robinson has served two terms as President of the Royal Asiatic Society. He was also Senior Vice Principal at Royal Holloway, University of London. In addition to his contribution, as the Sultan of Oman Fellow, to the academic life of the Centre, Professor Robinson will hold the position of Visiting Professor in the History Faculty at the University of Oxford.

## International Conference on Dialogue

The Director attended the International Interfaith Dialogue Conference organized in July under the auspices of HM King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz and hosted in Madrid by HM King Juan Carlos. The conference brought together representatives of religious communities from across the globe to discuss reconciliation, peace and mutual understanding. In his key-note speech to the conference, King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz called for priority to be given to a revitalization of the concept and practice of inter-faith dialogue in order to achieve practical, positive and concerted cooperation between people of different faiths.

The Centre has taken an active interest in international dialogue since the 1993 lecture on *Islam and the West* given by the Centre's Patron HRH The Prince of Wales. In that internationally well received lecture The Prince of Wales emphasized the need for people in the West and the Islamic world to "share experiences, to explain ourselves to each other, to understand and tolerate.... and to build on those positive principles which our cultures have in common". The ways in which such tolerance, mutual respect and understanding of shared values could be achieved was a central theme for the participants in the Madrid Conference.

# Conferences and Lectures

## Political and Economic Challenges in the Middle East

The Centre organized its Annual Workshop for the Royal College of Defence Studies on the theme of the Political Economy of the Middle East. The workshop provided participants with the opportunity to consider the political, economic and social challenges which currently confront societies in the Middle

East. It forms part of the wider programme by the Royal College for orientation of senior military staff. Participants, ranging in rank from Colonel to Brigadier-General, came from more than thirty different countries. The group was led by the Commandant of the Royal College, Vice-Admiral Charles Style CBE.

## Security and Stability in the Arab World

Current political developments in the Middle East were discussed during a roundtable discussion with a visiting delegation from the Egyptian Council for Foreign Affairs. The event brought



*Members of the Egyptian Council of Foreign Affairs.*

together academics, policy analysts, former diplomats and civil servants. Among the topics discussed were: weapons proliferation, rising oil prices and the role of regional and international powers. The delegation was led the Chairman of the Council, Ambassador Abdel Raouf Reedy and included Ambassador Mohamed Shaker and Dr Mostafa El Fiki, Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Relations, among others.

## Law and Human Rights

Mr Philippe Sands, QC, Barrister at Matrix Chambers and Professor of Law and Director of the Centre of International Courts and Tribunals at University College London, delivered a lecture at the Centre on *Torture Team: Cruelty, Deception and the Compromise of Law*. In his wide-ranging presentation, Mr Sands examined several high profile cases of individuals detained without charge and allegedly tortured by Western governments.

## Turkey & the European Union

Sir Stephen Wall, former Adviser to the Prime Minister on European Union affairs and Head of the European Secretariat in the Cabinet Office, delivered a lecture on *Turkey and the European Union*. In his lecture Sir Stephen examined the progress of negotiations for an agreement that would serve both the future national interest of Turkey and the wider requirements of European integration.

# Trustees Review Progress

The annual meeting of the Centre's Board of Trustees, held in Oxford in July, reviewed all aspects of the Centre's activities during the academic year 2007-2008 and discussed priorities for the coming year. These included: continued support for an increase in those appointments which contribute to the academic life of the Centre and to teaching and research in the University; the approval of research programmes being prepared jointly by the Centre and external institutions; continued emphasis on the international outreach of the Centre, which now involves contact with scholars and academic institutions in many



*Trustees on a tour of the New Building*

countries around the world. The Board also received reports on the Fellowships, Visiting Fellowships, and Research Scholarships held at the Centre during the past academic year.

# National Outreach

## Sir John Major

During a visit to Oxford, former Prime Minister Sir John Major KG CH, emphasized the importance of the Centre's work both at the national and international level in the contemporary world. He regarded the teaching, research and outreach activities of the Centre as



*Sir John Major with the Director*

having particular importance for Britain as well as the wider international community. Sir John is a member of the Centre's Strategy Committee.

## Shadow Home Secretary

The Rt. Hon. Dominic Grieve MP, Shadow Home Secretary, visited the Centre in August. He was interested in learning about the Centre's programmes related to the study of Muslim communities in Britain. In particular, he discussed the Centre's research into the housing needs of Muslim communities and its pilot project on political participation by Muslims



*Mr Dominic Grieve MP*

living in the Greater London area. Mr Grieve was supportive of these efforts and encouraged the Centre to continue the study of Muslim issues in the United Kingdom.

## HM Ambassador to Saudi Arabia

The visit by Mr William Patey, CMG, HM Ambassador in Riyadh, provided an opportunity to review the Centre's long-standing cooperative links with individuals and institutions in Saudi Arabia. Some time ago HRH Prince Saud Al-Faisal, the Kingdom's Foreign Minister, visited the Centre as its Distinguished Visiting Lecturer and made a well received presentation on *Overcoming Disconnect*. Prince Saud had expressed his support for the Centre's efforts to promote better academic ties between Britain and the Kingdom. During Ambassador Patey's visit there was an opportunity to discuss strategies for expanding those relationships in areas of mutual interest.

## The Lord Chancellor

The Rt. Hon. Jack Straw MP, Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, has expressed his support for the Centre and, during a recent visit to the new building, considered ways in which its facilities will be of service as a meeting-point for those engaged in inter-cultural dialogue and



*Mr Jack Straw MP at the New Building*

cooperation. Mr Straw, a member of the Centre's Strategy Committee, had previously visited the Centre, as its Distinguished Visiting Lecturer, to deliver a lecture on *Engagement with the Islamic World*.

## Shadow Culture Minister

The Rt. Hon. Ed Vaizey MP, Shadow Minister for Culture, spoke at a dinner hosted by the Centre. In his after dinner remarks Mr Vaizey emphasized the need for all communities in Britain to appreciate their shared common values in order to contribute to the well-being of the society as a whole. He noted the important contribution made by Muslims to the Conservative cause and national life more generally. Mr Vaizey also chaired a lively debate between young Conservative and Labour City Councillors who were present at the dinner.



*Mr Ed Vaizey MP*

## British Council Chief Executive

Mr Martin Davidson, Chief Executive of the British Council, visited the Centre to speak to the participants in the Young Muslim Leadership Programme. Mr. Davidson spoke about new initiatives to promote cultural awareness within Britain and opportunities for UK students to study abroad. He explained that Council initiatives, such as the *Connecting Futures* project, had sought to bring together young people from the UK and Muslim countries to



*Mr Martin Davidson with the Director*

listen to, and learn from, each other. Mr Davidson welcomed the prospect of future cooperation with the Centre on projects related to youth and leadership development.

## New Post in Gulf Studies

In order to develop the Centre's research into the history, society and culture of the Gulf, Dr Khalid Al-Azri has been appointed to a new post in Gulf Studies. Dr Al-Azri has a PhD from the University of Melbourne, Australia and an MA from Al Zeitouna University, Tunisia. He has also served as the Director of the Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Justice, Oman, from 2001 to 2003. While at the Centre Dr Al-Azri will examine the interplay of social customs and religious traditions in Gulf societies.

## New Malaysia Chevening Fellow

Dr Naim Mohd Mokhtar, a Federal Court Judge in the Shariah Court of the Petaling Jaya District, Selangor State, has been appointed to the Malaysia Chevening Fellowship at the Centre. He will be carrying out research into the establishment of a Family Support Agency for the Shariah Courts in Malaysia.

## Research Fellow

Dr Thomas Dahnhardt has been appointed to a Research Fellowship to work on the Centre's research project on the Social and Intellectual History of Muslims in South Asia. Dr Dahnhardt has studied at the University of Venice and at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London. He has done fieldwork at different institutions in India, and is the author of a recent book, *Change and Continuity in Indian Sufism* (2007).

# Training Young Muslim Leaders

The third annual summer school of the Centre's Young Muslim Leadership Programme was held in Christ Church during July. The Programme, which is organized jointly by the Centre and the Prince's Charities, sponsors a two-week residential summer school for young British Muslim men and women who have shown leadership potential in their respective careers. The Programme encourages participants to consider together the diverse ways in which they can engage with the wider society.



*Mr Stephen Timms MP (front row, sixth from the right) with the Director and participants of YMLP*

The summer school is structured around workshops, lectures, discussion groups and visits to principal national institutions of government, business and public life. The formal programme includes presentations by senior academics, representatives of community organizations, the diplomatic service, the media, the national and local government officials.

There were also opportunities for informal meetings with public figures which, this year, included: the Rt. Hon. Stephen Timms MP, Mr Sadiq Khan MP, and Dr Evan Harris MP. Discussions led by Lord Hameed of Hampstead gave considered to the opportunities and challenges of careers in the medical profession; and those led by Lord Bhatia of Hampton considered careers in the voluntary sector.

Throughout the summer school the focus of discussion was on the future local and national role of participants, and how they could best serve the aspirations and needs of the Muslim community as a whole, and play an active role in the future of their country.

Follow-up activities now form an important part of the Young Muslim Leadership Programme. The Centre facilitates continued contact with and among alumni of the Programme in order to sustain networks for continued exchange of ideas and experience and mutual understanding.