



Critical challenges in multi-religious Malaysia

The Deputy Prime Minister of Malaysia, HE Tan Sri Muhyiddin Hj Mohd Yassin, visited the Centre in Hilary Term, in order to deliver a lecture on 'Islam and critical challenges in multi-religious Malaysia.'

In front of a capacity audience at the Taylor Institute, the Deputy Prime Minister outlined the Malaysian government's commitment to the 'ideal of harmonious co-existence', emphasizing that it is ever more important that 'tolerance and moderation among nationalities' be promoted. His wide-ranging speech considered the various methods that could be used to achieve inter-religious harmony, and examined some of the challenges facing it.

Beginning by noting that both in global and historical contexts religious tolerance is becoming increasingly pertinent, he drew on Malaysia's rich history of diversity and its acceptance of difference to offer potential models for effective religious governance. By invoking the great Malaysian leaders of the past, and their commitment to building 'the nation upon the spirit of accommodation', he ably argued that it is the responsibility of people of all faiths to be united against the forces of intolerance. Even though there are

always challenges to be dealt with, he outlined his belief that a more tolerant world would inevitably eliminate all forms of extremism. Therefore, our focus must always be upon 'the shared common values and purposes that we all hold dear', if we are to achieve a truly global and interactive society.

Having acknowledged the important work that the Centre undertakes which contributes to achieving this goal, and thanking it for giving him the opportunity to present his ideas, the Deputy Prime Minister answered questions from the audience.



HE Tan Sri Muhyiddin Mohd Yassin giving a lecture in the Taylorian

Turkish Foreign Minister visits the Centre



HE Mr Ahmet Davutoglu signing the distinguished guest book

At the beginning of Trinity Term, the Centre was delighted to welcome HE Dr Ahmet Davutoglu, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs to Oxford.

He was received by the Director at the new building and given a tour of the site. He was especially keen to

see the Istanbul forecourt, which has been generously supported by the Turkish government.

The Foreign Minister later attended a lunch in his honour at the Centre which gave Fellows of the Centre the opportunity to share their work with him. The Centre has a long history of academic exchange with Turkish institutions; the Director outlined possible future areas of cooperation, and reflected on the Turkish Prime Minister HE Recep Tayyip Erdogan's major lecture on the role of Turkey in the alliance of civilizations at the Sheldonian Theatre, Oxford, last year.

The Foreign Minister expressed his support for the Centre's activities, affirming his belief that the Centre 'will have a historic role to play in ensuring inter-civilizational and intercultural dialogue.' He pledged that Turkey 'will continue to support the Centre to help achieve the common objective of global cultural interaction.' Before departing, he signed the Distinguished Guests Book.

Visiting Fellowships

The following have been awarded Visiting Fellowships during the coming academic year:

Dr Bassem Awadalleh, former Minister of Planning, Kingdom of Jordan. He is currently the CEO of Tomoh Advisory, and whilst at the Centre his research will focus on economic development in the Middle East.

Mr Ismail Cebeci, is from the Mamara University, Istanbul. His research focuses on conceptual issues in Islamic finance, and the methodological dilemmas it faces.

Dr Heba Raouf Ezzat, teaches political theory at the University of Cairo. Her research focuses on women in the Arab world and on globalization. She is a regular contributor to the Egyptian media.

Dr Oman Fathurahman is a philologist who currently works at the Center for the Study of Islam and Society at the State Islamic University of Jakarta. He is Chair of the Indonesian Association for Nusantara manuscripts.

Ms Amaal Yahyah Al-Moallimi, from the King Abdulaziz Center for National Dialogue in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has almost 20 years of experience in the education sector. She has been Head of the Training Committee in the Center of Education at the National Guard.

International Contacts

Azerbaijan



HE Mr Gurbanov and the Director with HE Mr Vaqif Sadiqov

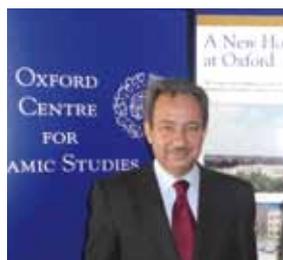
The Deputy Foreign Minister of Azerbaijan, HE Mr Vaqif Sadiqov visited the Centre in Hilary Term. He was accompanied by the Ambassador of Azerbaijan to the United Kingdom, HE Mr Fakhraddin Gurbanov. Following a briefing on the work of the Centre, the Deputy Foreign Minister offered his support for the future activities of the Centre, particularly those involving cooperation with Azerbaijani institutions.

Maldives

At the beginning of Trinity term HE Dr Farah Faizal, High Commissioner of the Maldives to the UK, visited the Centre. Ambassador Faizal expressed her admiration of the Centre's work, and her desire for exchanges between the Centre and academic institutions in the Maldives.

Oman

In April, HE Mr Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Hinai, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the UK, visited the Centre and was introduced to its activities and potential future areas of collaboration with Oman. Having visited the Great Hall in the new building that has been generously supported



HE Mr Abdulaziz Abdullah Al-Hinai

by Oman, the Ambassador went to a lunch in his honour held at the Centre, which was attended by members of the University and Centre Fellows.

USA

In March, Ms Farah Pandith, Special Representative for Muslim Communities in the US Department of State, visited the Centre to lead a roundtable session entitled 'The United States and the Muslim World'. Ms Pandith outlined the hope that the Centre and institutions in the United States could pursue joint projects to aid the cause of inter-civilizational dialogue.

The Centre was also delighted to host the Ambassador of the United States to the UK, HE Mr Louis Susman, for a meeting with



HE Mr Susman and wife with the Director

Centre Fellows to discuss the objectives of the Obama administration in the light of the Cairo speech and how the enthusiasm generated by it might be utilized. The Centre's recent Ditchley Conference on the relations between the US and the Islamic world was also outlined to him.

Uzbekistan

Senator Sadik Safaev, Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and HE Mr Otabek Akbarov, Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to London, were welcomed to the Centre in Hilary Term. Noting the history of academic exchange between the Centre and Uzbekistan, Senator Safaev hoped that the Centre's relations with Uzbekistani institutions would continue to expand and play an important role in the future.



The Registrar with Senator Safaev and HE Mr Akhbarov at the new building

Workshops

The Political Economy of Oil in the Middle East

In early January, the Centre, in conjunction with the ESRC's World Economy and Finance Research Programme, organized a one day workshop on the 'Political Economy of Oil in Middle East Exporting Countries.'

Attended by an international group of experts, the workshop discussed the political incentives generated by the region's abundant oil wealth. Focusing on the economies of resource rich countries in the Middle East, Centre Fellow Dr Adeel Malik and Professor Richard Auty

presented a possible conceptual framework for analysing the region. Separate sessions then focused on the challenges faced by Middle East economies, and attempted to delineate their complex patterns of financial circulation. There was a general agreement among the participants that a detailed study of the role of oil in the Middle East would be a fruitful area for academic study.

The workshop demonstrates the Centre's growing interest in the study of natural resources and economic development in the Middle East.

Islam and the Muslim world

In Trinity Term, the Centre organized a day-long workshop for the Royal College of Defence Studies. Attended by senior military personnel of many nationalities, the day was designed to give an introduction to the core values of Islam and broaden awareness of the global political climate.

Dr Afifi Al-Akiti, Islamic Centre Lecturer in the Faculty of Theology presented a paper on 'Understanding Islam and the Muslims'. In this he outlined the intellectual roots of Islam, and enlarged upon the key aspects of the Islamic faith. He made it clear that

tolerance and acceptance were at the heart of Islamic doctrine, and have been from its early years. Suggesting that, above all else, 'balance' between the heart and the head should shape how Muslims live, he encouraged the audience to be wary of stereotyping Islam.

Following this there was a question and answer session, in which the importance of education and interfaith dialogue was discussed and emphasized. The delegates then visited the new building, and had further opportunities to learn about the Centre's work, before returning to London.

Seminar series

Muslims in the Media

During the Hilary Term, the Centre held a series of seminars on 'Muslims in the Media'. Given by both print and television journalists, the seminars aimed to interrogate the complex relationship that exists between Islam and the media, and sought to analyse the way in which media coverage of Muslims can inflect public opinion.

Speakers included Mr Christopher Dickey (Newsweek) on 'Identity and Islam: How Media Fall into the Cultural Divide'; Mr Eyad Abu Shakra (Al Sharq Al Awsat)

on 'Britain's Immigrant Arab Press'; Mr Ian Black (The Guardian) on 'Reporting on Culture and Politics in the Middle East'; Mr Nacer Badri (Al Jazeera) on 'Sense and Sensationalism: Arab Television in the Age of Satellite Broadcasting'; Mr Mohamed Chebaro (Al-Arabiyya) on 'Post 9/11 and the Rise of the Arabic Media on the World Stage'; Mr Tim Marshall (Sky News) on 'Conflict in Southern Arabia: the War on Terror and Failed States'; Mr John Defterios (CNN) on 'Economic Crises in the Gulf: Oil, Banks and Billionaires'.

OCIS-Merdeka Scholarships

Following interviews held in Kuala Lumpur in March, the Centre and Yayasan Khazanah are pleased to announce that there will be five scholarships awarded for the forthcoming academic year. The selection committee looked for candidates with an outstanding record of academic achievement, as well as for evidence of future leadership potential and communication skills.

The Merdeka Scholarships aim to encourage global academic integration and to offer promising students from Malaysia the opportunity to study at Oxford and to experience Western models of learning. It is hoped that these scholarships will lead to the ties between the Islamic and the Western worlds being strengthened on the basis of shared purpose.

The scholarships for 2010/11 have been awarded to: Mohamed Imran bin Mohamed Ishak, who will read for a Masters in Pharmacology; Suwita Hani Randhawa binti Mohd Juginder, who will read for a DPhil in International Relations; Sylvia Wei Wei Kong, who will read for a Masters in Global Health Science; Sarena binti Che Omar, who will read for a DPhil in Biological Anthropology; and Rani Preatarshini Subassandran, who will read for a Masters in Law.

The Centre looks forward to welcoming these scholars to Oxford.

The role of Islamic Finance post banking crisis



HRH Dr Nazrin Shah, Crown Prince of Perak State, Tan Sri Dr Zarinah Anwar (right) and the Director

In March, the Centre, in conjunction with the Securities Commission of Malaysia, organized a conference in Kuala Lumpur on the 'Contribution of Islamic Finance Post Global Financial Crisis'.

The meeting, presided over by Tan Sri Dr Zarinah Anwar, was convened to provide an international forum to promote an informed discourse on topical issues regarding

the growth of Islamic finance and its integration into the global financial system. Attended by business leaders and high-ranking academics, the issues considered were the development of a scientific methodology on Shariah governance in Islamic banks, and the alternate economic models that Islamic finance could offer in the wake of the global market collapse.

In his keynote speech, HRH Dr Nazrin Shah, Crown Prince of Perak State, emphasized the need for transparency and balanced financial governance to ensure that a crisis of such a scale never occurs again. Throughout the two-day event, the participants noted that working together on a global level offered the most effective way of protecting the markets.

The Director and Dr Basil Mustafa, represented the Centre at the conference, and both approved of the international platform for dialogue and research that it offered. The Director commented that 'Given Malaysia's success in the development of Islamic capital markets, the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies welcomes the opportunity to work with the Securities Commission in this important area of study.'