



OCIS NEWS

OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Inaugural Lecture Series

Sir John Major speaks on ‘A World Adrift’

The Centre was delighted to welcome The Rt Hon Sir John Major KG CH who delivered a lecture on Monday 21st November to launch the Centre’s inaugural year of special events in the new building. Sir John took as his title ‘A World Adrift’ and a capacity audience attended the Malaysia Auditorium to hear his insights and commentary on recent international events and the challenges and opportunities the international community now face.

Sir John depicted a world in transition and confronting many risks. If the United Nations had failed to live up to all the hopes of its founders, that was a reason to strengthen support for its role, not to abandon it. He called for enhanced international cooperation, and the need to hear more from diplomats rather than demagogues, but also for determination in facing down challenges.

In his survey of international affairs, which encompassed the turmoil in the Middle East, East/West relations, BREXIT and many other issues, he cautioned against believing that there was a ready solution available to political leaders to solve every problem. In this ever more complex world it was more likely that every solution would bring its own accompanying problems. But with intelligence and

statesmanship he was confident progress could be made.

Sir John also engaged in a lively question and answer session with the audience of academics, students, diplomats and other invited guests. The future of the UK’s relationship with the European Union,

and particularly the implications for institutions of higher education and research, such as Oxford, were high on the agenda. The Vote of Thanks was given by Professor Louise Richardson, the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford. The Director hosted a dinner in honour of Sir John in the Oman Hall following the lecture.



Sir John Major speaking at the Centre

International Jury announces winners of Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah Prize in Islamic Finance

It was the unanimous decision of an international jury to award the 2016 Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah International Prize in Islamic Finance to the Islamic Development Bank as an institution and to HE Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali in view of his outstanding personal contribution.

The Islamic Development Bank is the world’s leading international Islamic finance institution, established in 1975 to foster the economic development and social progress of its 56 members spread over four continents. The bank provides loans and grants to finance productive activities in



key economic sectors. It operates on Islamic principles and provides assistance to Muslim communities in non-member countries, supporting the activities of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and its affiliated institutions.

HE Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali, who retired recently, was the founding President of the Islamic Development Bank and led the bank for over thirty years. His leadership was instrumental for the institutional development of the bank and the realization of its mission.



Dr Ahmad Mohamed Ali

Seminar for Prince's Trust International

Participants in the International Leadership Programme organised by The Prince's Trust International visited the Centre on 16th March. Their programme included academic presentations on the Centre's interests in Muslims in Britain, by Dr Asma Mustafa, and issues of Islam and heritage by Dr Michael Feener.

Open Doors for Oxford Literary Festival

The Centre once more opened its doors to those visiting Oxford for the Annual Literary Festival. Centre Fellows and staff provided tours and briefing on the Centre's academic work.

Scholarships: Enhancing Academic Opportunities

The Centre welcomed the following Scholars in 2016: Ms Tasnim Abdul Hadi (MBA), St Catherine's College, *Merdeka Scholar*; Dr Adli Ali (DPhil in Paediatrics), Wolfson College, *Merdeka Scholar*; Mr Irsyad Noor Abdi bin Khairil Anuar (DPhil in Biochemistry), St John's College, *Merdeka Scholar*; Mr Omer Nalbant (MEng in Materials Science), St Anne's College, *Noon Scholar*; Mr Ezzidin Yonis (BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics), Lincoln College, *Amanah Foundation Scholar*.

IAAC Reviews Centre's Academic Plans



The International Academic Advisory Committee members at the November meeting

The Centre's International Academic Advisory Committee met in Oxford on 22nd November. This Committee brings together an international group of eminent scholars, diplomats and public figures who advise the Centre on its academic policies and in particular its cooperation with scholarly institutions around the world. At this meeting the committee focussed on the new opportunities provided by the facilities now available in the new building of the Centre and how they can help expand international partnerships.

Eighth SC-OCIS Roundtable on Creating Shared Values Through Sharing Risk

The Centre hosted its Eighth joint Round Table on Islamic Finance with the Securities Commission Malaysia at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire on 25th-26th March. The keynote address was delivered by HRH Sultan Nazrin Shah, who was also guest of honour at a gala dinner hosted at the Wallace Collection in London and attended by senior guests from the world of business and finance. Conference participants continued

their discussions over the weekend, focussing in particular on the benefit to wider society of financial instruments providing for risk-sharing between the contracting parties which can also prevent abuses from developing.

This annual event, bringing together regulators, practitioners and scholars from around the world, is of growing importance and a leading element of the Centre's efforts to promote academic focus on Islamic finance.

Visiting Fellowships

Promoting International Academic Cooperation

The Centre has continued to attract a high quality group of visiting fellows and visiting junior research fellows in a wide range of disciplines and supported by a variety of schemes including the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Chevening programme.

Those in residence during the academic year included: Tan Sri Dr Syed Hamid Albar, former Foreign Minister of Malaysia; Dr Salman Ali, PhD (Penn), IRTI Jeddah; Professor Abulhakeem Al-Khelaifi, PhD (Manchester); Dr Idris Demir, PhD (Gazi); Dr Abubakr Muhammad, PhD (Atlanta); Dr Saira Bano Orakzai, DPhil (Peshawar); Dr Seyed Shahabedin Mesbahi, PhD (Berkeley);

Dr Xiaofang Jin, PhD (Lanzhou); Datuk Noripah Kamso; Mr Karim Hegazy Mohamed, MA (Brussels).

The following visiting fellows arrived in Hilary Term 2017: Dr Mohammed Hashas, PhD (Rome); Mr Cafer Deniz, BA (Istanbul), MSc (Warwick).

The presence of a full complement of four Chevening Visiting Fellows, from a variety of countries, regions and research interests was evidence of the value of the reconstituted Chevening-OCIS Fellowship Scheme.

Visiting fellowships are a key element of the Centre's continuing efforts to bring scholars to Oxford from around the world, contributing to the diversity of the academic community.

Lord Dyson delivers Azlan Shah Lecture on Religion and the Law



Lord Dyson delivering his lecture

The Rt Hon Lord Dyson, until recently Master of the Rolls, gave the Azlan Shah lecture on 'Religion and Law: Some Current Problems' at the Centre on Wednesday 23rd November

2016. The Director introduced the lecture and the session was moderated by the Warden of Wadham College, and former Director of Public Prosecutions, Lord Macdonald, who also proposed the vote of thanks. The lecture, and subsequent question and answer session, illuminated many themes of legal, ethical and moral importance, with reference to judgements of the English and European courts, relevant to religious custom and practice. This lecture fell within the special series under the auspices of the Centre's Sultan Azlan Shah Fellowship, the first in that series to be delivered in the new auditorium and was a further step in developing the Centre's activities in the field of law.

Ambassador Idriss Jazairy speaks on The Heritage of Emir Abd el Kader

On 15th February Dr Idriss Al Jazairy delivered a lecture on the legacy of the Algerian scholar and resistance hero, Abdul Kader Al Jazairy. Ambassador Al Jazairy, Director General of the Geneva Centre for Human Rights Advancement and Global Dialogue, and a United Nations Special Rapporteur, examined the history and writings of Emir Abdul Kader, arguing that the extent to which he pioneered, in both theory and practice, concepts of human rights in

armed conflict show that these are not, as often believed, a solely European achievement. The Muslim World, and particularly the Emir himself, have left a rich heritage in this respect.



Ambassador Idriss Jazairy

Joint Event with the Foreign Office and Foreign Service Programme Training Young Diplomats



Professor Margaret MacMillan addressing the participants

On 10th February the Centre hosted a training day for the Oxford University Foreign Service Programme and Fast

Stream new entrants to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Diplomatic Academy staff delivered training sessions. Professor Margaret MacMillan, Warden of St Antony's College, gave a well received lecture on history and diplomacy, arguing that while study of history might not offer diplomats solutions, it could often point to hazards ahead. The group also discussed "Understanding Islam and Muslims" in a workshop with the Centre's KFAS Fellow, Dr Afifi Al-Akiti, which stimulated much discussion and was warmly appreciated.

Centre's Growing Publications List

Three Centre Fellows have recently published monographs: Dr Talal Al Azem: *Rule-Formulation and Binding Precedent in the Madhhab-Law Tradition* (Brill); Dr Moin Nizami: *Reform and Renewal in South Asian Islam: The Chishti-Sabris in 18th-19th Century North India* (OUP); Dr Fouzia Farooq Ahmad: *Muslim Rule in Medieval India: Power and Religion in the Delhi Sultanate* (IBTauris).

The Centre's *Journal of Islamic Studies* volume 27 issue no.3 and volume 28 issue no.1 were published last term.

September's issue of the JIS (27/3) contains articles by Ahmed El-Wakil, on "The Prophet Muhammad's Treaty with the Christians of Najrān: An Analytical Study to Determine the Authenticity of the Covenants" and Luis J. García-Pulido, on "The Mastery in Hydraulic Techniques for Water Supply at the Alhambra". It also includes 17 book reviews

The latest issue of the JIS (28/1) contains articles by Karen Taliaferro, on "Ibn Rushd and Natural Law: Mediating Human and Divine Law", Nathan Hofer, on "Sufism in Fatimid Egypt: The Problem of Historiographical Inertia", and Sana Haroon, on "Contextualizing the Deobandi Approach to Congregation and Management of Mosques in Colonial North India". The issue also contains 22 book reviews.

Project on Muslims in Britain

The Centre's Muslims in Britain Project has developed further in recent months, with the award to Professor Mark Halstead, Azman Hashim Fellow, of a research grant from the British Academy to undertake research on 'Muslims in Bradford'.

Dr Asma Mustafa, Salahuddin Abdul Jawad Research Fellow, continues her British Academy supported research project on Muslims in the Armed Forces.

A fortnightly round-table has attracted wide participation within Oxford and is a valued new activity.

UNESCO Director General launches multi volume History of Islamic Culture

On Monday 27th March the Centre hosted the Director General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, Ms Irina Bokova, for the launch in the United Kingdom of UNESCO's "Different Aspects of Islamic Culture" collection. The publication of the final two volumes of this collection brings to a successful conclusion a collaboration involving more than 150 scholars worldwide. In her keynote speech, the Director General declared "the Collection is testimony to the power of knowledge and culture to bring people together in the search for truth". She also paid tribute to the Centre's role in promoting international academic cooperation.

To mark this important intellectual milestone, the Centre invited senior scholars to take part in a panel discussion entitled "Common Heritage and Cultural Diversity in Muslim Societies: Understanding the

Past, Building the Future". Participants included Dr Abdulrahim Ali Mohamed (International University of Africa and an editor for the UNESCO Collection), Professor Marcia Hermansen (Loyola University), Professor Carole Hillenbrand (Edinburgh University), and Professor Bruce Lawrence (Duke University). A lively discussion ensued with an audience of scholars and students, as well as the Centre's invited guests.



HE Ms Irina Bokova