UBD-SOASCIS EMINENT VISITING PROFESSOR DELIVERS PUBLIC LECTURE ON ISLAM AND THE NEW ASEAN COMMUNITY

On 2nd and 3rd November 2015, in his latest visit to UBD-SOASCIS in his capacity as Eminent Visiting Professor (EVP) Distinguished Professor Tan Sri Muhammad Kamal Hassan of the International Islamic University, Malaysia delivered one public lecture, a special guest lecture to undergraduates taking the compulsory University Module MS1501 ‘Islamic Civilization and the Modern World’, and had a session with the students and staff of SOASCIS.

The public lecture was entitled “Islam in the New ASEAN Community.” In deliberating on the topic Professor Kamal Hassan focused on three main issues, namely peaceful co-existence among Muslims and non-Muslims in the religiously diverse regional community, the civilizational mission of Islam, and the possibility of Southeast Asian Muslims offering an alternative philosophy for the region’s development and integration. Commencing his lecture with comments on the 3Ps that form the core philosophy of ASEAN – Peace, Prosperity, and People to People [Relationship] – he then moved on to the common problems facing humanity and ASEAN. He mentioned among others the issues of transnational crime, drug menace, human trafficking, environmental degradation, moral decay and social ills, corruption, poverty and economic disparities. He also touched on the geopolitics of the world powers and what it means to ASEAN.

He then explored the possibilities of Muslim communities within the ASEAN emerging as the new models of justice, sound management, peace, prosperity, integrated knowledge and moral excellence and integrity. He sees these possibilities as conditional upon the Muslim success in meeting three main challenges that he identifies as follows: (1) Reconstruction of a transnational Islamic civilization based on al-wasatiyyah; (2) the need for new Islamic leadership produced by the universities in all fields that will generate paradigm shifts in light of global, regional and national crises; and (3) the challenge of the Sustainable Developmental Goals endorsed in the UN Summit in 2015.
PROFESSOR OSMAN BAKAR’S PUBLIC LECTURES
IN SLOVENIA AND TURKEY

Last December 2015 (10th–16th) Professor Osman Bakar, SOASCIS Director, delivered four lectures in Slovenia and Turkey at the invitation of several universities in the two countries. His first lecture was a keynote paper presentation at an International Symposium at the Faculty of Arts at Ljubljana University, Slovenia (11-13 December) that was organized by its Department of Asian Studies. The theme of the Symposium was “Comparative Perspectives: Islam, Confucianism and Buddhism.” Professor Osman’s paper was entitled “Islam and Confucianism: Comparative Perspectives.” The Symposium was attended by about forty scholars, academics and PhD students from such countries, as Germany, Holland, the United States, China, South Korea and Hong Kong, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Turkey, Italy and Australia, not to mention Slovenia, the host country itself. Altogether fifteen papers related to the theme of the Symposium were presented during the two-day event, including the key papers presented by Professor Osman, Professor Nevad Kahteran from the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and University Professor Dr Jana S. Rosker, Head of the Department of Asian Studies during the Inaugural Plenary Session.

In Turkey Professor Osman participated in an International Panel on “The Teachings of Mawlana Jalal al-Din Rumi and their Impact on the World” at Konya Necmettin Erbakan University on 15th December. Professor Osman was invited to speak on Rumi’s influence in the Malay world and South Asia. The Panel was chaired by Professor Bilal Kuspinar, Dean of Faculty of Fine Arts and Director of the International Rumi Centre for the Study of Civilizations. In the audience at the fully packed hall was Professor Muzaffer Şeker, the University’s Rector.
Professor Osman also gave a seminar on the topic “Islamic Civilisation and the Modern World” at the University’s Faculty of Theology (İlahiyat Fakültesi). His next lecture (16 December) was at the Istanbul Sabahattin Zaim University on the same topic. The University’s Rector, Professor Dr Mehmet Bulut and the top Management Team attended the talk. Professor Osman’s third and last lecture (16 December) was at the Istanbul Şehir University where he spoke on the topic “The epistemologies of al-Farabi and al-Ghazzali: Comparative Perspectives.” The lecture was organised by the Philosophy Department as part of its series of Philosophy Talks that are open to the Istanbul academic community.

THE ACADEMY OF SCIENCES MALAYSIA (ASM) INVITED PROFESSOR OSMAN TO TALK ON THE POSSIBLE ROLE OF PHILOSOPHY AND RELIGION IN A NATIONAL SCIENCE PROJECT OF THE FUTURE

On 14th August 2015 Distinguished Professor Osman Bakar, SOASCIS Director, delivered a talk organised by the Academy of Sciences Malaysia (ASM) in Kuala Lumpur on the subject of how and where religion and philosophy could play a role in helping Malaysia’s scientific community envision and realise its Mega Science Project 2050. The talk was arranged by the Academy’s Envisioning Malaysia in 2050 Foresight Initiative. The talk was attended by some of the most distinguished Malaysian scientists, including YB Tan Sri Dr Ahmad Tajuddin Ali, the Academy’s President, YB Datuk Dr Mazlan Othman, Project Director of the Mega Science 2050 and the Founding Director of the Malaysian National Space Agency (ANGKASA), and YM Tengku Datuk Dr Mohd Azzman Shariffadeen Tengku Ibrahim, the Founding President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of MIMOS (Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems) who is a prime mover in the 2050 Foresight Initiative. In his lecture Professor Osman emphasized the view that, both rightly understood, religion and philosophy can play a significant contributory role in the theoretical formulation and practical implementation of the visionary Mega Science Project 2050.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY: CONTRIBUTION OF ISLAMIC PSYCHOLOGY TO WORLD CIVILIZATION

Professor Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara of SOASCIS was invited to speak at the International Conference on Islamic Psychology (ICONIPSY 2015) held in Yogyakarta, Indonesia from 9 to 16 October, 2015. The main theme of the conference was the “Contribution of Islamic Psychology to the World Civilization.” He delivered a paper at the conference and took part in a panel discussion together with the renowned Islamic psychologist Prof. Dr Malik Badri of International Islamic University Malaysia, and Prof. Dr Robert Frazer, a founder of the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology and its successor, Sofia University, California, USA.
The panel discussion was preceded by the opening lectures delivered by the chairman of Indonesian Association of Psychology (API), a representative of International Institute Islamic Thought (IIIT), and a keynote speech by Professor Rahmatullah Khan from Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) Medical School, Penang, Malaysia. During his talk Professor Badri drew attention to the writings of Abu Zayd Al-Balkhi and Ibn Sina on mental diseases and their treatment. Professor Frazer spoke at length on Sufi psychology. He stated that the three main components of human psyche, heart (qalb), self (nafs) and soul (ruh) should be developed together not only in relation to themselves but also the physical counterparts in a harmonious and balanced fashion.

Professor Mulyadhi Kartanegara, the third panelist, reminded the audience that modern psychology, being secularized, has lost its main subject-matter i.e. psyche or the soul that has been replaced by the concept of neurological function of the brain, leading to the development of ‘brain-based psychology.’ This psychology does not recognize the immortality of the soul and rejects the existence of the hereafter, one of the important pillars of faith (iman). Therefore, he emphasizes the need for bringing back the ‘soul’ to its lofty place as the main subject of psychology.

THE 4TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF ISLAMIC SCHOLARS
IN MALANG, INDONESIA

Senior Assistant Professor Dr Gibril Fouad Haddad represented SOASCIS at the 4th International Conference of Islamic Scholars (ICIS 4) in Malang, Indonesia on 23-25 November 2015 where he delivered a paper on “Wasatiyah and Other Correctives to Radicalisation in Contemporary Scholarly Discourse.” The International Conference entitled “Upholding Islam...
as Rahmatan li‘l-‘Alamin (Mercy to the Worlds): Spiritual and Cultural Education towards Reforming the Condition of the Ummah” was organised jointly by the Indonesian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Religion, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang and the Nahdiyyah Association of Authorized Sufi Groups of Indonesia. It was officiated by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia, Abdurrahman Mohammad Fachir and the Rector of UIN Malang, Dr. Mudjia Rahardjo.

The objective of the conference was to strengthen moderation and tolerance according to Islam to help foster an education system that combines fikr and dhikr as the basis of global ethics for successful employment and morally sustainable societies. The event took place at UIN Malang. It was attended by several public figures such as Indonesia’s Vice President Dr Yusuf Kalla, ICIS co-founder KH Hasyim Muzadi and Brunei Minister of Religious Affairs, YB Pehin Udana Khatib DPSS Ustaz Hj Badaruddin bin Pengarah Dato Paduka Hj Othman who spoke on “Wasatiah and Manhaj and Its Implementation in Brunei Darussalam.”

SOASCIS DEPUTY DIRECTOR PRESENTED PAPER AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, HONOLULU, HAWAII

On 10–12 December 2015, Pg Dr Norhazlin, SOASCIS Deputy Director presented her paper at an International Conference on the theme “The Changing World – New Challenges”. Held at the Hyatt Place Waikiki Beach hotel, Honolulu, Hawaii, USA, one of the major aims of the conference was to provide a forum for discussion for all the delegates representing a wide range of disciplines. The international event brought opportunity for establishing links with academics from all over the world. Representing various fields of study such as the Humanities and Social Sciences, Education, Business and Economics as well as Science and Technology the participants discussed the global debate on the new challenges in the changing world. The organizer of the conference has cooperated with numerous renowned universities and prestigious research centres. It has an established record in building relations among academics of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Pg Dr Norhazlin’s paper entitled “Revolutionary Curriculum Reform in Facing a New Era of the Changing World: Challenges at the Universiti Brunei Darussalam” was one of the twenty-seven papers presented at the Conference. Her paper focuses on the curriculum reform at Universiti Brunei Darussalam introduced in 2009, which is named the GenNEXT curriculum, including the Discovery Year programme. In addition, the challenges of implementing this new curriculum were thoroughly discussed in the paper.
GRADUATE SEMINARS AT SOASCIS

22 August 2015: Dato Dr Othman Yatim, Visiting Professor at Academy of Brunei Studies spoke on Malay Islamic Art: Unity in Diversity. His main focus was on showing how Malay artists applied the principles of Islam to their works of art in the context of Malay culture.

19 September 2015: In her presentation on Waqf and Education in Brunei Darussalam: An Overview, Pg Dr Norhazlin Pg Hj Muhammad, lecturer and Deputy Director of SOASCIS highlighted the roles, procedures and practices of Waqf and Baitul Mal section at the Department of Islamic Religious Council of Majlis Ugama Islam, Brunei Darussalam in managing waqf assets. She suggested several measures for efficient and effective management of waqf assets, particularly for education purposes (waqf tarbiyah).

17 October 2015: Associate Professor Dr Hj Hussainmiya (Faculty of Arts and Social Science, UBD) gave a talk on Islam and Law in Brunei: An Evolutionary Approach. This talk focused on the historical evolution of Islamic Law in Brunei Darussalam. It discussed the significance of the practice of law according to the dictates and exigencies of different ages, especially during the past decline of the Brunei kingdom. He also compared the Bruneian situation with practices elsewhere in the Malay World.

14 November 2015: Dr Gubara Said Hassan (Institute for Policy Studies, UBD) presented a talk on The Middle East? Shifting Geopolitical Imaginations and Borders. He discussed the development of the ‘Middle East’ as a geographical, political, and strategic economic entity from the early twentieth century up to the present. The historical relationships of the region with several countries were considered to be central to the evolution of the ‘Middle East as a ‘concept’ with its changing and often fuzzy geographical boundaries and its institutionalization by foreign contending powers.

14 November 2015: Associate Professor Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara talked on Islamic Psychology in the Modern World: Establishment of the Soul as a Subject Matter of Psychology. Due to its secularization, modern psychology, instead of being a soul-based psychology, has become a brain-based psychology, where the ‘psyche’ is conceptualized as a neurological function of the brain. Dr Mulyadhi emphasized that ‘Islamic psychology,’ that takes into account the totality of the human being, composed of both body and soul, is urgently needed for resolving the spiritual and mental problems of today.

5 December 2015: Distinguished Professor Datuk Dr Osman Bakar gave a talk on Wasatiyyah as the Foundation of Global Citizenship and a New World Moral Order: How Rational and Practical Is it? Set against the contemporary havoc of extremism and violence unleashed in the name of Islam as an important background, Professor Osman’s lecture sought to explain the Qur’anic concept of wasatiyyah or middleness and its significance for the concept of global citizenship. He also expounded why wasatiyyah appears to be the only rational answer to humanity’s search for a peaceful and just world order.

12 December 2015: Associate Professor Dr Jabal M. Buaben presented a talk on Solidarity and Dissent within the Faith Community: A Muslim Perspective. His paper was a personal reflection that explored issues of ‘solidarity’ and ‘dissent’ within the Muslim Community. The core message of Dr Jabal’s seminar was that human beings have freedom to believe or not to believe. He stressed that the freedom to choose comes along with responsibility because eventually there is accountability for whatever choice one might make.

12 December 2015: Dr Azmi Mohamad spoke on Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom: Two Opposite Truths in the Secular-Reformist Muslim Narrative. Drawing from the teachings of the Qur’an this paper sought to challenge both the concepts of absolute free will and predetermination. Dr Azmi’s presentation was a rebuttal to the claim that true submission to God forces Muslims to dispense with human reasoning and conscience, consequently preventing them from coming to terms with the challenges of modernity.
NEWS OF FORMER AND CURRENT SOASCIS STUDENTS

- Ms Aikol Bolotbekova from Kyrgyzstan created history at Universiti Brunei Darussalam (UBD) when she became SOASCIS’ first female student to graduate. She received her Master of Arts in Islamic Civilisation and Contemporary Issues at UBD’s 27th Convocation held in September 2015. Her thesis is titled “The Role of Mass Media in Da’wah: A Case Study of Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan.”

- Miftachul Huda (Indonesia), a second year Masters student, co-authored an article with his supervisor Associate Professor Dr Mulyadhi Kartanegara. The article, with Huda as the first author and titled “Islamic Spiritual Character Values of al-Zarnūjī’s Ta‘lim al-Muta‘allim” was published in Mediterranean Journal of Sciences (Vol. 6, Issue 4), a Scopus Indexed journal.

- Mr Fareed Malik, PhD student (Kashmir) presented his paper entitled, “Globalisation: An Islamic Perspective” at an International Conference in Srinagar, Kashmir, India. This conference was organised by the Institute of Islamic Culture and Civilisation in collaboration with Government College of Education in Srinagar. Titled “Islamic Studies Congress—2015” the Conference was held on 8–9 August 2015.

- Mr Kalimullah Khan has completed his doctoral dissertation and returned to Pakistan, and is waiting for the results.

- PhD candidates, Mr Hilmy Baihaqy (Brunei) and Mrs Eiman Mohamed Eltom (Sudan) presented their papers at a regional conference organised by Universiti Islam Sultan Sharif Ali (UNISSA) on 19–20 August 2015. The theme of the conference was “The Contribution of Ash’ariyyah and Maturidiyyah towards Strengthening the Islamic Faith.” Baihaqy’s paper was titled “Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī: Model for the Modern Science Scholars” and Mrs Eiman’s “Sheikh Muhammad Said Ramadan al-Buti: His Approach to the Creed, Da’wah and Contemporary Muslim Issues”. Both papers were published in the conference proceedings.
FORTHCOMING EVENT

SICON 5

5th SOASCIS International Conference

9–11 May 2016

Theme:

Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Contemporary Islamic Studies:
Possibilities in the Light of the Traditional Ideas of Ijtihad, Tajdid, Islah and Bid’ah

Venue:

Lecture Theatre Hall, The Core, Universiti Brunei Darussalam

Confirmed Co-organisers:

- International Islamic University Malaysia (Centre for Islamic Economics), Malaysia
- International Institute of Islamic Thought (IIIT), Riyadh, Saudi Arabia
- Konya Necmettin Erbakan University, Turkey
- Ebrahim College, London, UK
- The Islamic Academy, Cambridge, UK

For details please visit: soascis.ubd.edu.bn

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