

## CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

### Islamic Da'wah in Southeast Asia

An International Conference on Islamic Da'wah in Southeast Asia: Cultural and Human Dimensions, was held in Kuala Lumpur from Sha'ban 23 to 25, 1413 A.H., (15th to 17th February, 1993). The conference was jointly organized by the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) and International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM). The objectives of the conference were: (1) To gain a better understanding of the culture and characteristics of dominant ethnic groups in Southeast Asia; (2) To identify better ways and means of propagating Islam in the light of the cultural values, philosophies and world views of the diverse ethnic groups in Southeast Asia; (3) To be appraised of the problems and challenges faced by Islamic Da'wah Organizations in Southeast Asian countries as part of a fast-developing and dynamic Pacific Rim beyond 2000.

The conference was divided into a number of sessions. After inaugural session, the first two sessions were devoted to the problem of socio-cultural context of southeast Asia. Prof Dr. Kamal Hassan read a paper on 'Facets of Southeast Asia which constitute the Socio-Cultural Context for Islamic Da'wah.' Another paper was read by Dr. M. Nor Nawawi on, 'Islam and Ethnicity in the Context of Southeast Asia.'

A number of sessions were devoted to the *Image of Islam and Muslims* in the eyes of Non-Muslims of the region. Papers covered the perceptions of Chinese, Non-Muslim Indigenous peoples and Hindus in this region. This was logically followed by sessions in which a number of scholars deliberated on the *Problems and Prospects of Conveying a better Understanding of Islam* to the various ethnic and religious groups. The religious and ethnic groups discussed included Chinese, Hindus, Christians and the non-Muslim Indigenous people in Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Phillipines and Myanmar. The final session was devoted to psychological approach in da'wah.

A large number of eminent scholars from various institutions and countries participated in the conference. They include among others, Prof. Dr. Anis Ahmad, Prof. Dr. Malik Badri, Prof. Dr. Aris Othman from IIUM.

### Globalism and the Muslim Ummah

The conference on 'Globalism and the Muslim Ummah' was held on 16-17 October, 1993 at al-Malik Faisal Hall, IIUM campus at Petaling Jaya. It was jointly organized by the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) and the *Usaha Membantu Membina Insan* Foundation (UMMI). The conference aimed at discussing the present state of the ummah in the post-cold war world and possible alternative.

A message from The Prime Minister of Malaysia, Dato Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohammad was read in the conference, in which he drew the attention of the participants to the tremendous changes the world order is undergoing, and that the nature and the speed of change, which is truly unprecedented. The prime minister said that "the Muslims needs to understand the changes so as to be ready for the challenges posed by the globalization that is taking place in the new unipolar world."

The conference began with a speech by Dato Dr. AbdulHamid AbuSulayman, Rector IIUM on 'The Need for Reform of the Muslim Mind.' Drawing upon his recently published book *The Crisis of the Muslim Mind*, Dr. AbuSulayman argued that due to lack of initiative to refresh their mind, and due to lack of intellectual efforts to cope with the change of time, Muslim civilization has been subjected to domination by external powers. He emphasised the need for reform of the Muslim mind in order that Muslims may regain their past glory.

Several papers concentrated on the present state of the Muslim ummah and recommended possible solutions to overcome its problems. These included a papers on 'Islam in a Global Order: Priorities for Concerted Action,' by Dr. Louay Safi, of the Department of Political Science IIUM; 'Information Technology and the Muslim World,' by Tengku Mohammed Azzman of the Malaysian Institute of Microelectronic Systems (MIMOS); 'Strategic Parameters and Geopolitics of the Muslim World: New Challenges in the Post Cold War Era' by Dr. Ahmet Davutoglu of the Department of Political Science IIUM; and 'The OIC: A United Nations of Muslim Countries?' by Dr. Abdullah Al-Ahsan of the Department of History and Civilization IIUM.

A number of papers concentrated on the economic problems of the Muslim world. Dr. Abdul Rashid Moten of the Department of Political Science IIUM, read a paper on 'Overcoming Dependency of the Muslim World,' while Dr. AbulHasan M. Sadeq of the Research Centre of IIUM contributed a paper on 'Eradication of Poverty from an Islamic Perspective.' Dr. Sufian of the Faculty of Engineering IIUM read a paper on, 'Engineering Education: An Islamic Perspective.'

Tan Sri Dato Muhammad bin Haji Mohd. Taib, Menteri Besar, Selangor Darul Ehsan, also participated in the conference and delivered a speech on 'Islam, Muslims and the Need for a Positive Image Construction.' He emphasised the development of such a theoretical perspective before the Muslim world marches into the 21st. century.

### **Islamic perspectives in sociology and anthropology**

A one day conference was organized by the department of Sociology and Anthropology on 25th October 1993. The purpose of this conference was to discuss Social and Anthropological issues from an Islamic perspectives.

The first paper on 'Towards A Syariah-Based Society: Religious Development in Kedah' by Sharifah Zaleha Syed Hassan from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia discussed the process of Islamization of Kedah and its development towards a shariah based society. Kedah, like Kelantan on the east-coast, can boast of its many private religious institutions and its *pondok* system of religious teaching is still important today. Kedah can also boast of its famous 'ulemā and is fast moving towards a shariah based society.

The second paper was by Dr. Yusuf Ziya Ozcan who presented his research on the quality of life in Kelantan. In measuring quality of life in Kelantan, one has to take into account the political, socio-cultural and religious background of the area. The researcher showed full awareness of the these problems. This research was actually initiated by another researcher, and was later taken up by Dr. Oscan.

The third paper is on 'Ethnocentric trends in Sociology' was presented by Dr. Jamil Farooqui. The author discussed the developments in Sociology in the western context and the need for an Islamic approach in the discipline. This, in his opinion, is necessary to solve the various socio-cultural problems of the world which the western social science has failed to do.