understanding of social and political change, so as to facilitate satisfactory and fundamentally reliable scholarly treatment of contemporary realities in the Muslim world. All thinkers stressed the responsibility of contemporary Muslim scholars to present a sound alternative approach when studying the social sciences, in order to release existing scholarship from the conceptual monopoly of the prevailing methodology of ‘intellectual neo-imperialism’. This Congress was a fruitful start towards formulating a common framework for application of the Islamic worldview, values and norms in various aspects of human knowledge, and in outlining a common strategy for advancing paradigmatic Tawhidic discourse as an alternative epistemic paradigm for the reconstruction of society, culture and civilisation.

Global Conference on Islamic Resurgence: Challenges, Prospects and the Way Forward (Shah Alam, 7 September 2013)

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The international conference held on 7 September in Shah Alam, organised by the Muslim Youth Movement of Malaysia (ABIM), was primarily a venue for Muslims active regionally in the Islamic movement to gather and benefit from insights of leaders on what has worked, what global issues confront the movement and how they may be addressed. The conference was opened by YAB Dato’ Seri Abdul Khalid Ibrahim, Chief Minister of Selangor.

The Islamic movement in Southeast Asia has successfully promoted a moderate form of Islamic renaissance, which no doubt is a reason for its success. The keynote address was delivered by Dato’ Seri Anwar Ibrahim, co-founder of ABIM and IIIT. Anwar called for governance in Muslim countries that applies justice, considers a maqasid al-Shariah approach, and provides economic empowerment to the people. Reform must give priority to da’wah (inviting to Islam), education and training, as well as public awareness. The linking of da’wah and daulat (government) was made by a number of speakers. Anwar highlighted the successful Malaysian experience of peaceful and tolerant relations with Hindu and Buddhist compatriots.

Dr Syed Khairudin Aljunied from Singapore who spoke on the historical background to Islamic resurgence in Southeast Asia highlighted the importance of the digital media in shaping the next phase of resurgence and recommended five steps as the way forward: (1) Establishing a Tarbiyyah Foundation, and (2) Islamic Research Institute, (3) Documentation Programmes of first-hand experiences from older workers, as well as collecting manuals of Islamic
movements, (4) Transnationalism – holding annual symposiums, and (5) providing global visibility with an online encyclopaedia of Islamic movements. Professors Mohammad Nor Nawawi and Mohammad Redzuan Othman presented excellent reviews of the history of Islamic Resurgence in Malaysia and the seminal role ABIM played in the process, which took off especially on the Universiti Malaya campus in the mid-1970s.

The conference was held against a backdrop of rising problems in Syria, Egypt, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and the plight of the Rohingyas in Myanmar. The current bright spot is Indonesia, which was described by the head of Muhammadiyyah, Indonesia’s largest Muslim organisation, Professor Din Syamsudin, as taking place on two main fronts – a mass social movement displaying the ‘conversion’ of nominal abangan Muslims to become devout Muslims and an increase in Sufi practices, as well as the rise of Muslim intellectuals who are taking their place as hands-on technocrats in government and industry. The movement is committed to a pluralistic ‘democracy’ – supporting judicial reforms, encouraging good governance, strengthening the social base for public political participation, participating in conflict resolution, and promoting interfaith and intercultural harmony. This is indeed a commendable development in the world’s largest Muslim country.

A Roundtable Discussion was held on Friday, 6 September, among local and international delegates from Indonesia, the Philippines, South Africa, Syria, Bangladesh, France and Qatar. Dr Ahmad Totonji provided nasihah based on his great depth of experience over 45 years within the movement in well-known organisations such as FOSIS, MSA, IIFSO, IIIT, and called on the da’is to properly understand Islam, work harder and systematically, institutionalise and build strong foundations, conduct research and think collectively, and focus on commonalities between Muslims while accommodating differences. That evening delegates were hosted at the Himpunan Solidariti Kemanusiaan (Solidarity Gathering for Humanity) programme at Malawati Stadium, Shah Alam where ABIM and various community leaders spoke in support of the Rohingyas and Muslims experiencing trials in Bangladesh, Egypt, Syria, and Palestine.

A suggestion here for future conferences would be to include presentation of papers, which provide results of historical research into Islamic movements in countries at various stages of development – da’wah or daulat – and the lessons to be learnt for the benefit of current dai’s. Not only successful examples deserve study but also challenging cases where weaknesses could be identified and strategies developed to overcome these. This is the path of islah and ihsan (continuous improvement). The movement would benefit from a wider representation of delegates such as from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands at future conferences.