

Socialist Party (PSM), and Mr. Anas Zubedy, the managing director of Zubedy (M) Sdn. Bhd. Dr. Jeyakumar in his talk argued that society can only truly embrace its plurality when it realises and behaves as Malaysian. He added that while complete racial equality is not feasible, as the land was originally Malay, some basic constitutional rights must relentlessly be upheld. Prof. Teo in his talk proposed that the Malay language should always be the impetus of unity, and therefore should be the medium of instruction in every educational institution. As there is a lack of multi-cultural appreciation between the races in Malaysia, Prof. Teo proposed that schools provide avenues through their curriculum for fostering integrated and mutual understanding. In the same vein, Anas Zubedy argued that Malaysia could be deemed a nation with a wounded heart as we are suffering from a critical trust deficit. Therefore, we need to heal the wound by cultivating a culture of fairness, self-criticism, compassion, empathy and moderation. The presentations were followed by an interactive question and answer session.

**In Conversation with Abdennour Bidar: On Multi-religious Societies
in the 21st Century
(IAIS Malaysia, 24 October 2019)**

Wan Naim Wan Mansor

The event was hosted and organised by IAIS Malaysia in collaboration with the Embassy of France in Malaysia and Alliance Française de Kuala Lumpur. The public talk is part of the French Talks series aimed at creating a space for dialogue and a bridge between French and Malaysian cultures. The event featured Abdennour Bidar, French philosopher and author of *L'Islam sans soumission* (Islam without Submission), and IAIS Deputy CEO, Mohamed Azam Mohamed Adil, as the moderator. The event brought together a healthy crowd of 150 attendees, which included local activists, NGO workers, and representatives from the French community in Malaysia.

Bidar began by sharing his personal journey as a Muslim growing up in France, a country known for its strong secular values. Much of his pluralistic worldview was shaped by his Muslim-converted mother, adoptive Moroccan father, and atheist grandfather, as well as his early interactions as a schoolboy in an elite private school. He proceeded to argue that the presence of Muslims in France is not a threat, but an opportunity for Islam to contribute to French society, especially on spiritual questions that remain unanswered by secularism. Central to Bidar's philosophy is the concept of 'self-Islam', in which humanity

is sacred but bears a great responsibility to prosper on the earth. He concluded by asserting that *laïcité* (liberty, equality, and fraternity) is in line with Islamic values, specifically *wahdatul wujud*, which ascribes the unity of everything with God. The Q&A session brought up interesting topics, such as the question of state intervention in religious affairs, the theological implications of ‘self-Islam’, and the causes of breakdown in a multi-religious society.

Roundtable Discussion: Designing *Sadaqah* Models For Child Grant Project in Malaysia: Shariah, Legal & Financial Analysis (IAIS Malaysia, 26 November 2019)

Abdul Muhaimin Misran

At a glance, Malaysia seems to be doing fine economically. However, child-related problems remain unresolved. Over 1.5 – 1.8 million children are living in relative poverty, a figure that impacts the fabric of society.

On 26 November 2019, IAIS Malaysia in collaboration with UNICEF hosted a roundtable discussion on “Designing *Sadaqah* Models For Child Grant Project in Malaysia: Shariah, Legal & Financial Analysis” in an attempt to find a feasible initiative by maximising Islamic financial tools to overcome child-sensitive social protection issues.

The event managed to gather policy-makers, scholars, religious bodies, bankers, *takaful* providers, as well as NGOs to discuss the feasibility of leveraging *sadaqah* as a means of assisting child welfare.

A universal child grant is more than the government can provide. At the moment, the allocation channelled through Jabatan Kemajuan Masyarakat (JKM) is only RM100 per month per child under the B40 segment known as *Bantuan Kanak-Kanak* (BKK).

Sadaqah House, which was initiated by Bank Islam, is the first institution of its kind and a living example of using *sadaqah* collection to provide aid for *asnaf* (the needy). Since its establishment in 2017, the yearly collection has been RM300,000.00 with an average of RM20,000.00 per week, 5 per cent from *Surau Waqf*.

The Chief of Social Policy from UNICEF, Stephen Barret, ended the session by stressing that UNICEF will continue to support child-sensitive social protection in Malaysia, which requires a lot of thinking and consultation. He expressed his gratitude to everyone for their ideas and contributions during the session.