

issues. After the lunch hour and Zohor prayer, Dr. Fazlun Khalid, Founder & Director, Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (UK) continued the seminar with the third keynote speech, entitled, “Sustainability: The Economics of Futility.” As a renowned Muslim global environmentalist, he revealed the dark side of the economic system based on *riba*’ (usury), initiated by a certain country as ‘virus money’ to enhance the lifestyle of the people without consideration for the natural world. Finally, the seminar ended with the fourth keynote speech by Dr. Kalithasan Kailasam, Director of River Care Programme at the Global Environmental Centre, entitled “River Care & Rehabilitation in Malaysia: Latest Developments.” He mentioned that the actual role of drains and rivers is to allow rainwater to flow. After sharing the development of the river rehabilitation programme in Kuala Lumpur, he highlighted that we have to keep the river clean since it belongs to us all.

### **Myth of ‘Free Media’ and Fake News in the Post-Truth Era (IAIS Malaysia, 7 December 2019)**

*Apnizan Abdullah*

The programme was held on 7 December 2019 at 10 am at IAIS Malaysia. The topic of discussion comes from the book authored by the speaker, Dr. Kalinga Seneviratne. The book essentially reveals both the myth and truth of the free media and of fake news doctrines in the post-truth world order. The author starts his book by questioning the existence of the truth era. The book also highlights the disruption to the news media that has arisen from the emergence of the internet. The author asserts that media ‘liberalisation’ has weakened the basic premise of Libertarian Media Function Theory, which states that the media is the ‘Fourth Estate’ that protects the citizens from abuses of power by the government. He also explained how excessive commercialisation of the media and the commodification of news has changed journalism all around the world.

The sharing session commenced with an introductory remark by Dr. Chandra Muzaffar, the President of the International Movement for a Just World (JUST). Dr. Chandra pointed out that the manipulation of freedom of expression via free media and fake news doctrines is a global phenomenon. He pointed out that Westerners who have championed the idea of freedom of expression and democracy are the real actors in this mainstream manipulation. This scenario has happened in many areas, including in science, the economy, technology and many more. The real aim behind it is to gain control over resources (such as oil) and nations.

Dr. Kalinga drew on his vast experience of journalism and the media. He mentioned that his writings are all based on his career. Fundamentally, he questioned the existence of the truth era. He also pointed out that abuses of power by governments through free media and fake news are not the only issues we need to look into. This is because corporate domination of the media has also been abusing the public trust, presenting coverage that may be true, ‘half true’ or even false. He asserted that the media is about reporting exceptional stories. The media should provide information and stories that attract people’s attention. Eventually, Dr. Kalinga called for a new paradigm in news reporting and explained how it can be transformed from an adversarial model into one of public advocacy in promoting more cooperation and social harmony in society. A mindful communication strategy drawing upon Asian philosophical ideas was recommended. He also urged young Asian scholars to read his ideas and commence further research and develop communication theories on free media and fake news based on their national experiences.

### **IAIS Islamic Finance Talk Series 2019 (IAIS Malaysia)**

*Mohammad Mahbubi Ali*

The International Institute of Advanced Islamic Studies (IAIS) Malaysia, in collaboration with Islamic Economic Society (MES) Malaysia, has successfully organised several Islamic Finance Talk Series (IFTS) in 2019. The series brought together reputable personalities in Islamic finance, from Shariah scholars to Muslim economists to Islamic finance practitioners.

The first IFTS was held at IAIS Malaysia on 20 August 2019 on the theme, “Bringing Vision & Strategy To Life: Malaysia’s Sustainable & Responsible Investment Growth Story.” Featuring Mr. Mohd Radzuan Tajuddin, an Islamic finance consultant from ZICO Shariah Supervisory Bhd, it brought his 23 years of experience with the Securities Commission to bear an Islamic sustainable and responsible investment in Malaysia. He also highlighted Malaysia’s vision 2020 as a basis for supporting Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The second IFTS invited prominent Muslim economist, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ugi Suharto, who is currently senior lecturer at the University of Buraimi, Sultanate of Oman, to discuss the subject of ‘Islamic Economics as a School of Economics’. Hosted at IAIS Malaysia on 5 September 2019, Dr. Ugi examined the possibility of promoting Islamic economics as a particular school of economics among the various existing schools. He argued that Islamic economics fulfils all the criteria