

Other challenges include confronting discrimination under current leadership, forging unity among Muslims on the one hand and with the Myanmar society on the other. Being recognised as a citizen, for instance, still remains a problem due to the difficulties and complications of registering for the National Scrutinisisation Card, a prerequisite for citizenship. Myanmar Muslims benefit from Myanmar's vibrant agrarian economy, the result of being blessed with such agriculturally conducive aspects as fertile soil, fresh water resources, large water reserves, high quality agricultural products (e.g., organic, not genetically modified, fruits) and an efficient irrigation system. Yet resistance to change has prevented the industry from realising its full potential because farmers prefer to stick to conventional methods rather than embracing modern technology.

A few recommendations emerged from the deliberations. An example is the proposal for the establishment of a Muslim Affairs Ministry or Department, a practice which has precedence in other countries in the region like Singapore and Thailand. Other suggestions that were made were the changing of the current mindset to become more global, the fostering of better relations among Muslims as well as non-Muslims through dialogue, and concrete initiatives for economic improvements, e.g., fresh water harvesting and multi-farming system.

**Visit to IAIS Malaysia by a Delegation headed by
HE Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Minister of State,
Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Foreign Affairs,
Republic of Singapore
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Christoph Marcinkowski, Berlin, Germany

On his visit to IAIS Malaysia, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, who was appointed quite recently (on 21 May 2011) to his current position as Minister of State in both Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and who serves also as one of five Members of Parliament for the Tampines GRC constituency, was accompanied by his country's High Commissioner to Malaysia, HE Mr Ong Keng Yong, and furthermore by Mr Filbert Tay, First Secretary at Singapore's High Commission, and Ms Samantha Toh, Country Officer in Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The event featured welcoming remarks by Professor Mohammed Hashim Kamali, the CEO and Director of IAIS Malaysia, who provided a concise introduction to the Institute's activities. Emeritus Professor Osman Bakar (Deputy CEO, IAIS Malaysia) added to Professor Kamali's remarks by focussing on the role of Muslims within ASEAN.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli, in turn, focused in his introductory remarks on the problems faced by Singapore's Muslim community as a minority with the setting as a minority in a secular society. He emphasised solution-oriented and practical approaches on the part of the Singapore government in order to better integrate Singapore's Muslims. The main concerns are currently rehabilitation of individuals involved in drug addiction and counter-terrorism, and how to address those issues best, such as through improvement of welfare. The Minister of State also provided information on the constitutional setting of Islam in the island republic, such as on the 1966 Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) or MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura, also known as the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore). Mr Masagos Zulkifli mentioned the relative lack of open-mindedness among many of Singapore's Muslim clerics as the key obstacle for reform and integration.

The lively Q&A session was dominated by questions related to *madrasah* education and *waqf* (Islamic endowments) administration in Singapore and how to manage best the balance between the requirements of modern society and traditional Muslim values.

In terms of better understanding the background of the delegation's visit, it should be added here that about 15% of the population are Muslims, most of them Malays. The majority of the Malays are Sunnis, following the Shāfi'ī legal school. Other ethnic Muslims groups include Indian and Pakistani communities as well as a small number of Chinese, Arabs and Eurasians. About 17% of Singapore's Muslims are ethnic Indians. There are also Muslims (also mostly Indians) in the island republic who follow the Sunni Ḥanafī legal school, as well as Shi'ite Muslims, the latter being divided into the Twelvers (Malays and Indians) and various Ismā'īlī branches (Indians).

Moreover, there are currently 69 mosques in Singapore. With the exception of Masjid Temenggong Daeng Ibrahim (which is administered by Malaysia's southern State of Johor), all the mosques in Singapore are administered by MUIS. MUIS (*Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura*, the Islamic religious Council of Singapore) is a statutory board which plays an important role in the administration of Muslim affairs. Currently, there exist also six full-time *madrasahs* as well as several part-time *madrasahs* in Singapore.

Apart from these key Muslim institutions, there are also community self-help groups, voluntary welfare organisations and civic groups like the Association of Muslim Professionals, the MENDAKI Foundation, the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Teachers Association, Muhammadiyah, and the Islamic Theological Association of Singapore (Pertapis), most of them Malay-dominated. However, there are also several Indian-Muslim organisations in Singapore. In addition, the Muslim Converts' Association of Singapore (also known as Darul Arqam) caters for converts.