

**SPEECH BY
YAB DATO' SERI ABDULLAH BIN HAJI AHMAD BADAWI
AT MAJLIS MAKAN MALAM SEMPENA SIMPOSIUM EKONOMI ISLAM
AT MUZIUM KESENIAN ISLAM MALAYSIA
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First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to welcome our foreign guest to Malaysia, especially to those who are here for the first time and to those who are quite familiar with Malaysia.

2. It is indeed a great honour to Malaysia for being chosen to host this 20th al-Baraka Symposium for Islamic economy the first time ever being held outside the middle east and gulf countries. The gathering of prominent speakers and participant be it locally and overseas will once again provide us with a useful platform to discuss and deliberate matters pertaining to the economy involving Muslims throughout the world.

3. In this critical environment, it is necessary for Muslim intellectuals to carefully examine their communities institutions and policies in the light of Islamic principles for the ummah. One of the areas in which this need is most visible is in banking and finance, a key part of economic policy. This requires input from two disciplines: Usul al-Fiqh and economics. Both must apply traditional principles to the contemporary world, combining the transmitted (Naqli) sciences and intellectual (ʿAqli) sciences. This transcends the duality of erroneously combining ijtiḥad from the Islamic world with economics from the western world. Precise understanding of Islamic principles must inform both disciplines in order to successfully apply the Islamic paradigm to economic problems. Bad economic analysis can misinform the best ijtiḥad, just as an erroneous ijtiḥad can vitiate the vest economic analysis.

4. Consequently, it is essential to oppose taqlid, or blindly following earlier legal opinions, which frustrates ijtiḥad. Indeed, it is dangerous to assume that there is no possibility of giving fresh views on the basis of legal principles and no need to apply the syari'ah to newly-created situations. Islam espouses ittiba', or imitation based on sound evidence, not blind following without enquiry. Yet, at some point after the fourth century, the concern of many fuqaha turned away from ijtiḥad and towards taqlid by focusing on the author of legal opinions rather than their content.

5. In today's complex environment of industrial production and institutional trade, this approach is no longer possible. Early fatwa dealt with relatively simple economic situations in which exchange was more individual than institutional, and production was more agriculture than industrial. Because questions about just and unjust transactions were simpler. The faqi did not need the expertise of others and could make legal deliberations alone. This is extremely difficult today since the knowledge required to deal with the complex environment is enormous, requiring specialized investigation in several areas. Consequently, there is a need today for a collective, interdisciplinary ijtiḥad which brings together the necessary expertise to solve a given problem. Research centers are need which combine the talents of fuqaha, economists, and other social scientists to provide an integrated Islamic approach. This concentration of resources can help eliminate erroneous fatwa and provide conducive for vigorous and organising dialogue between Islamic secular.

6. Islamic scholars need to be truly united to foster cooperation and collaboration of sorts. We must make ourselves strong and resolute so that together we can turn around the negative effects of globalisation to make it an effective mechanism for the greater prosperity of the ummah.

7. It is in this context that all participants should strive to achieve concrete milestones out of this symposium to enable Islamic countries to get on with the work at hand to achieve not only high levels of economic prosperity but also greatness, honour and dignity for our respective peoples.

8. On this note, I would like to thank al-Baraka for their continuing effort to organise such symposium and to the sponsors and contributors who have contributed in one way or another especially Yayasan al-Bukhari who are hosting the dinner tonight, may Allah bless all of you for your support, kindness and making this gathering a success.