

## **THE OPENING OF ISLAM AND INDUSTRIALISATION CONFERENCE**

BANK NEGARA, KUALA LUMPUR, 21 January 1993

Allah be praised for by His Grace we are able to gather here this morning to officiate the opening of the Conference on Islam and Industrialisation.

2. The topic of this Conference "Islam and Industrialisation" may seem odd to some Muslims. Is there an Islamic industry or an industry based on Islam, or can the industries we know and are familiar with today be Islamised? Up till now we have not considered the significance of industry's contribution to Islam or to Muslims or to Islamic practices. We believe that without industries, we can still be a Muslims, indeed even good Muslims. In fact, during the time of Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h) there were no such industries as we know today, yet Islam was able to spread and to prosper. Why then is there a need to link industry with Islam? Indeed why is industry necessary at all.

3. We often consider industry merely as a business, a quest for excessive profits. Consequently, we regard industrialists as people who are greedy, who are interested only in an affluent lifestyle, and are thus linked to being irreligious. We also tend to think that any venture to accumulate wealth will involve cheating and other forms of abuses. Therefore, we regard all industries as unIslamic or deviational and obstructive to the performance of our religious duties or ibadah in Islam.

4. However if we examine industry from the truly Islamic perspective we will realise that industry is a service. While this service can bring evil if misapplied, it can also be beneficial and important to religion and our religious duties.

5. Before the introduction of printing for instance, the al-Qur'an was hand-written. Even for this purpose a paper industry was needed, if leaves were not to be used as writing materials. When the al-Qura'n had to be hand-written, the number of copies of the al-Qur'an was limited. The possibility that copies owned by a particular society would be destroyed because of war, calamities or fire was great. Thus it became necessary for some people to memorise the al-Qura'n. This was in order to prevent the text of the al-Qura'n from being lost.

6. When printing was first invented many Islamic clerics issued religious rulings that Islam forbade the printing of the al-Qura'n. This ruling was also influenced by the scribes who wrote the al-Qura'n. They felt that printing the al-Qura'n would threaten this livelihood.

7. Because of this ruling for many centuries Muslims generally, religious teachers and officials could not own or read the al-Qura'n. On the other hand, when the ruling was revoked later, Muslims were able to own and study the al-Qura'n. As a result Muslims became able to enhance their Islamic knowledge. Today it is unthinkable for anyone to issue a 'fatwa' preventing the printing of the al-Qura'n. But "fatwas" can and are still being made based on narrow perceptions. And this is true with industry as a whole. Because of a wrong perception of industry, it does not get the focus nor the support from the religious perspective.

8. Today it must be acknowledged that the printing industry has benefited Islam. True, the printing industry can be misused -- as for example in the printing of pornography. But we cannot blame the printing industry. The blame should be placed on the printers. If all new inventions in this industry are made by Muslims who are conscious that industry is a service to the community, it is possible that they could find ways to prevent the abuse of the industry. For example if only Muslims have expertise in the field of design and production of printing equipment, they could supply them with conditions imposed or they could refuse to supply them altogether. Such has been the case when Islamic nations were supplied with arms by other countries. They could not use them freely.

9. Without industry, many religious rites would be difficult to perform. The textile industry is important in order to pray, indeed to cover the 'aurat'. More Muslims are able to perform their pilgrimage with the invention of aircrafts and the development of the aero-space industry. The construction industry has enabled us to perform our prayers in mosques which can accommodate the increasing number of Muslims. In other words, there is no industry that would not provide service to Muslims in their daily life and in performing their religious duties.

10. One responsibility of an Islamic community is to prepare for defence. During the Prophet's time defence equipment meant horses and swords. And during the Prophet's time there existed industries to produce swords and war horses.

11. Preparation for defence in this era requires a defence industry consistent with modern technology. It is the duty of those who adhere to the teachings of the al-Qura'n to invent, produce and supply defence equipment. The defence industry is very important to Muslims. But because Muslims paid no attention to industry, a sophisticated Muslim defence industry is not available. What is important to remember is that the arms industry cannot exist without thousands of other industries. All kinds of knowledge and capabilities are

required to invent and produce arms, land, sea and air transports and spacecrafts. Muslims must therefore master all industries and not just the production of defence equipments.

12. Today we witness with sorrow the killing and torturing of thousands of Muslims, including the abuse of women in Bosnia. Nothing can be done by the Muslims because no Islamic nation has the capability in terms of a sophisticated and strong military force. All this is due to a perverted view of modern industry and the assumption that industry is not related to Islam. Industrialists are not respected by Islamic society or recognised as contributors to the well being of Islam.

13. When Turkey was a world power capable of conquering large parts of Eastern Europe, the country's military modernisation process was hampered because its religious experts objected to the soldiers wearing trousers. For decades this trivial matter was debated by the religious experts while the attacks on the Turkish empire were intensified. Today the wearing of trousers is no longer a controversial religious issue. Anyone can wear them. We do not become unIslamic just because we wear western trousers. But the time spent on debating the problem had hindered the process of modernising the Turkish army and its defence industry to the extent that Turkey lost its empire. To some extent the fate of the people of Bosnia Herzegovina today is due to the polemic over the trousers which had hampered the modernization of the Turkish army. In the end, young Turkish army officers were so frustrated with the attitude of the religious leaders that they blamed religion. When they gained power they set up the so-called "Secular Government". Many Muslims are critical of these Turkish officers, "The Young Turks", for supposedly choosing a secular system of Government. But before we condemn them it should be remembered that at that time the Turkish Sultanate Government was so weak that the Western powers planned to divide Turkey among themselves. Only the bravery and actions of the Young Turks saved Turkey. Because of this, Turkey, including its territory in Europe was saved and remained an Islamic state.

14. What is the relevance of Turkish history to Islam and industry? Its relevance lies in the fact Muslims are often distracted by trivialities that they forget their bigger problems and responsibilities. We often focus on trivial issues, yet ignore serious matters like the Muslims' capability in industry. True, industries which are established purely for wealth with no consideration of service towards society is not compatible with the Islamic ethics. But Muslim entrepreneurs can always emphasise the services aspect and

what industry could do to the society. Profits may be enjoyed, but profits too must be spent on Research and Development so that the service rendered could be further improved and made cheaper. In this way, more profits could actually be obtained. But this does not mean that industry should be regarded by the Muslims as a charity. Legitimate and reasonable profits are permissible in Islam. But the service aspects must be emphasised. With this, industry will be more acceptable to the Islamic community. Regardless of the Muslims' stance on industry, we should realise that although industry, which is being controlled by non Muslims, has no religious objectives, it can indeed destroy the Muslims. Cases in point are Bosnia and West Asia.

15. Industry will continue to play a role as a provider of services needed by society. No industry can be successful if it does not supply something that is needed by society. A food entrepreneur is no less important than an entrepreneur in heavy or sophisticated industry in terms of service to the community. If we can look at industry from this perspective, that is from the perspective of the supplier of services, then the role of industry to Muslims and Islam would be better understood and supported. Indeed Muslims who venture into an industry would be more aware of its links to religion if they look at industry as a service to society and religion. In considering industry as a service, focus should be made not only on wealth and profits, but also on the quality and value of services provided. If Muslim entrepreneurs have this character and approach towards industry, inevitably their industries would become more developed in terms of quality and profits. And why not? Goods produced by entrepreneurs who wish to give service in addition to obtaining profits, will definitely be more sophisticated, and have better quality and be reasonably priced. Customers would prefer to buy sophisticated, good quality and reasonably priced goods. To regard an industry as a service is not only consistent with the Islamic viewpoint towards any venture and wealth, but will actually contribute towards success.

16. If we accept industry as a service to the ummah and religion, I am confident there would be an enhancement of Muslim interest in industry. With this, various types of industries, researches, acquisition of knowledge and the creation of a noble attitude could be promoted among the Islamic countries and among Muslims. God willing, this will also make Islamic nations and Muslims more progressive and successful as well as ensure that the Islamic religion and Muslims are more respected.

17. Seen from this angle, this Conference is crucial and timely. Muslims should regard industry as a means to

strengthen the Muslim states and the Muslims so that they are better respected and capable of defending themselves. Ignorant Muslims cannot contribute towards the greatness of Islam. On the other hand industrial capability, as well as the extensive command of all kinds of knowledge necessary for industrialisation, will make Islam and Muslims more respected.

18. The negative view and attitude of the Muslims towards industry will not only be unprofitable for them but will in fact be against Islam and its teachings. The time has come for Muslims to mould an approach and attitude towards industry that is truly Islamic.

19. I hope this Conference will be able to shape Muslim attitude towards industrialisation which is consistent with Islam. If this attitude can be moulded, then numerous efforts could be made to ensure that Muslims are able to own and manage industries effectively and will benefit Islam and all the Muslims.

20. On this note, in the name of Allah, the Most Gracious and Most Merciful I declare this Conference officially open. Wabillahitaufik walhidayah, wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.