



4TH IDR ANNUAL RESEARCH SEMINAR

17 APRIL 2017
IMPIANA HOTEL, IPOH

The Fourth IDR Annual Research Seminar was officially opened by Perak's Menteri Besar, YAB Dato' Seri DiRaja Dr Zambry Abd Kadir. The seminar has been an annual event for the think tank since 2014. It was designed as a platform for researchers to share their research findings on socio-economic development. The seminar aims to facilitate collaboration between the government, businesses, civil societies and academia. The theme for this year's research seminar - 'Mobilising Research Findings into Impactful Actions' addresses the failure to utilize enormous and important research findings in the formation of public policy.

The event started with a briefing from IDR's CEO, Dr Mazalan Kamis. It was followed by a special

address delivered by Pn Nor Eni Ismail, Director of State Economic Planning Unit (UPEN). Then, Prof Rajah Rasiah from Universiti Malaya delivered the keynote address entitled 'Transforming Economies: The Building Blocks'. Two dialogue sessions were then held before the event break for lunch. The sessions were entitled 'Mainstreaming Sustainable Development towards Inclusive Economic Growth' and 'Innovative Economic Model Fostering Better Well-Being'. In conjunction with the seminar, YAB Menteri Besar launched the first IDR's policy note on building a green economy in the state of Perak while IDR and Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (UPSI) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on future collaborations.



Dr Zambry officiates the launching of 'Building a Green Economy in the State of Perak' book during the opening ceremony



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TAKING THE GOOD OUT OF EVIL

A bomb blast on a Saint Petersburg metro train on 3 April 2017 claimed the lives of 15 people, including the perpetrator, and wounded more than 60 people, including children. Most of the victims were students; 20-year old Dilbara Alieva was a psychology student from Alzerbaijan, Maxim Aryshev, from Kazakhstan, was an IT student at St Petersburg state university and Mansur Sagadeev, a 17 year old who had celebrated his birthday days before the attack, was a student at St Petersburg College of Communication. Russian investigators identified the suspect as 22 year old Akbharzon Jazilon, who was born in Kthe, former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan and later assumed Russian citizenship. The motive? Inconclusive. On April 5th, nine bombing and shooting attacks took place in various parts of the world, including Pakistan, Somalia, Iraq and India. All incidents were classified as terror attacks and had killed more than 33 people. Just 10 days later, a car bomb detonated near a convoy of buses in the al-Rashideen neighbourhood of western Aleppo, Syria, killing at least 126 people, 80 of them were children. The buses carried civilian evacuees from the towns of al-Fu'ah and Kafriya. In total, there were 29 terror attacks in the month of April 2017 alone. On average, that is one terror attack happens every day for the month.

“ The government, non-governmental organisations and the civil society in Malaysia have played significant roles in portraying a progressive, economically thriving and peaceful Muslim nation ”

Globalisation has dissolved the challenges of geographical border in human relations, allowing people across different continents and time zones to connect to each other. But for militants, terrorists and insurgents alike, globalisation provides an unprecedented opportunity for them to unleash their terror to innocents in other parts of the world. Every other day, the headlines on major newspapers and online portals would be engrossed with one terror attack after another, up to the point when the gruesome events no longer incur shock to the readers. One might wonder what this sense of numbness to incidence of terror might mean to our state of mind and humanity in general? The Muslims, especially, have been at the unfortunate end of political and social debate on terrorism. Many had to face mounting generalisation and misconception of the religion due to the deviant acts of a few, even when it happened millions of miles away.

Malaysia, fortunately, has a brand like no other Muslim majority country. She is known as a force of 'Moderate Islam', a beacon of hope where Muslims and non-Muslims are able to live, work and play in peace, with zero terror occurrence when the rest of the region is battling one form of militant violence after the other. The government, non-governmental organisations and the civil society in Malaysia have played significant roles in portraying a progressive, economically thriving and peaceful Muslim nation. International events held on our soil allow foreign dignitaries and visitors to experience the beauty of our country first hand. This is especially important as the foreign dignitaries and visitors will become unofficial spokespersons of Malaysia and Malaysians once they return to their homeland. Organising an international-level event is not only advantageous economically but also socially, and in the bigger picture, a proactive way of addressing misconceptions about Malaysia. Over the years, Pangkor Dialogue has opened its doors to dignitaries from all over the world and the numbers has steadily increased year after year. The visitors were not only exposed to the economic potentials of the state of Perak but also to the generosity, friendliness and kindness of its people.

Nuradilla Noorazam
IDR News Editor

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NCIA Continues to Support Pangkor Dialogue

13 APRIL 2017
NCIA HEADQUARTERS, PENANG





THE SEMINAR AIMS TO FACILITATE COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT, BUSINESSES, CIVIL SOCIETIES AND ACEDEMIA.

The seminar is considered as the most successful and biggest events since its inception. 26 papers were presented by researchers from various universities, government agencies and private sector. More than 300 participants have attended the seminar that include government officials, businessmen, researchers and NGOs. For the first time, an exhibition was added as part of the event lineup. The exhibition showcased IDR's publications such as IDR News, IDR Perspectives and more and rural products from Kampung Luat and Kampung Raban by Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The seminar was officially closed by YB Dato' Mohamad Zahir, the State Executive Councillor for Industry, Investment and Corridor Development. His closing speech was read by Dr Mazalan. ■

3Q Performance Presentation

21 APRIL 2017
BANGUNAN PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN, IPOH

3Q Performance Index is a measurement to gauge the level of quality in three areas: living, opportunity and income for the people in Perak. Since 2010, Institut Darul Ridzuan (IDR), State Economic Planning Unit (UPEN) and PLANMalaysia have worked closely to monitor the performance of the index. During the presentation session, IDR was represented by its CEO, Dr Mazalan Kamis alongside Abdul Rahman Hashim, Mohd Azraf Jamaludin and Dr Mohd Afandi Abu Bakar. UPEN and JPBD were each represented by two senior officers.

The performance of all the 44 indices were presented by Dr Afandi. He said the findings were based on data obtained in year 2015. In his presentation, Dr Afandi highlighted that some indices require certain attention for improvement. He added that there are technical issues that need to be addressed and therefore proposed for a meeting to be conducted with all relevant agencies in Perak to discuss, in detail, the performance gap and other matters relates to data management in the state. ■



The Northern Corridor Implementation Authority (NCIA) is a valuable strategic partner for IDR in ensuring the success of Pangkor Dialogue since 2015. On IDR's visit to NCIA's headquarters, Dr Mazalan presented to NCIA the progress of Pangkor Dialogue 2017 and highlights of achievements for Pangkor Dialogue 2016. He informed NCIA that this year's dialogue will continue to grow with the introduction of a new side event, the Festival of Ideas. The new event is designed as a multi-site, multi-partners and multi-focus event with participation from international and local institutions.

On Pangkor Dialogue 2016, Dr Mazalan thanked and congratulated NCIA for their cooperation in making the event a huge success. Last year's event was considered historical as it was the first time that a Noble Peace Prize Laureate graced Pangkor Dialogue and spoke lengthily about the theme. Prof Muhammad Yunus of Grameen Bank, Bangladesh, wowed everyone in attendance and inspired many to pursue their dreams and continue to work

hard to help those in need. It was also during last year's

Pangkor Dialogue that the capital of Perak, Ipoh, received the accolade as the World's 5th Social Business City. The stunning list of attendees, including federal ministers from the federal government of Malaysia, leading social, economic and thought leaders from around the world have elevated the status of Pangkor Dialogue into a meeting point for the world's leading minds.

Aemizureen Kamarudin, NCIA's Head of Corporate Communication Division then presented on NCIA proposed engagements during the event. One of them is to showcase local Northerners who have made significant accomplishments in and outside the country. The proposed activities were welcomed by Dr Mazalan. He hoped that NCIA's involvement in Pangkor Dialogue will bring mutual benefit to the state of Perak and NCIA. ■



Meeting with Director General of ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat

18 APRIL 2017
WISMA PUTRA, PUTRAJAYA

Dr Mazalan Kamis, Abdul Qadir Osman Aros and Ahmad Fahmy Tajudin represented IDR to meet with the Director General of ASEAN-Malaysia National Secretariat Office, Ambassador Jojie Samuel. The meeting's objective was to promote Pangkor Dialogue and rally the secretariat office's support in courting delegates and ministers from ASEAN countries to attend and participate in the upcoming Pangkor Dialogue in September.

Dr Mazalan took the opportunity to share the success stories of Pangkor Dialogue 2016. He also shared the plan for this year which includes the participation by United Nation Development Program (UNDP), activities on social business that will involve the public and a newly introduced program - the Festival



of Ideas. He hoped that this year's Pangkor Dialogue will showcase a more visible presence of ASEAN delegates and leaders.

Ambassador Jojie requested for IDR to submit a concept proposal for them to review. He added that they are more than willing to help identify and recommend key individuals

from their circle who would add value to the conference. He also recommended for IDR to submit their proposal to the Economic Planning Unit (EPU). He said Pangkor Dialogue should also look at organising a mini retreat for ASEAN Ministers as part of a special program during the conference. ■

Moh Ngeteh With NGO Hilir Perak

20 APRIL 2017
DEWAN KUALA SUNGAI MANIK, TELUK INTAN

As part of the various activities held during the Perak state government retreat in Hilir Perak, IDR organised a special town hall session with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the state. The program started with a talk by Dr Mazalan entitled 'NGO: Confronting Challenges and Exploring Challenges'. In his talk, Dr Mazalan presented the current challenges for NGOs and how they can confront them by empowering their knowledge and building capacity. He also talked about Pelan Tindakan Strategik (PTS) NGO 2016- 2020 and the focus areas involved in the plan. He hoped that they will give the state and IDR full cooperation to work on these agendas.

YB Dato' Shamsudin, the State Executive Councillor for NGO & Civil Societies then took the stage to speak on the importance of the recent NGO blueprint, PTS NGO 2016-2020, which was produced with sufficient targets and monitoring supports. The Perak



state government is said to be determined in engaging NGOs as the third force in state development planning. The event was then followed by a fruitful Q&A session. Among the issues raised by the participants include the level of dedication and seriousness the government has on engaging with NGOs

as part of its decision making process. Some of the other matters asked include questions on how NGOs can improve their operations and routine tasks. One of the participants actually rose and requested for the government to recruit more young people to be involved in NGOs. ■

IDR & CYC Commit to Work Together for Youth Development



5 APRIL 2017
IDR HEADQUARTERS

A delegate from Commonwealth Youth Council (CYC) led by Kishva Ambigapathy, the Chairperson of CYC, visited IDR as part of the organization's working visit to Perak. CYC's delegation was welcomed by Dr Mazalan Kamis and other representative from IDR - Mohd Nadzri Kamsin, Abdul Rahman Hashim, Hakim Baihaki and Azizul Hakim. Dr Mazalan briefed the delegate on IDR's background and history. Then Abdul Rahman presented an overview of IDR activities including youth's programs organized by IDR.

The Chairperson of CYC was quite impressed with what IDR has done so far. He encouraged IDR to do more and champion youth cause and his organization is willing to co-operate to work together for youth development. Kishva, a Malaysian, informed IDR that the CYC secretariat under his leadership has just moved its headquarters from Sri Lanka to Malaysia. He explained that the organization currently focuses on advocacy and research work pertaining to youth issues. They work closely with many governmental and international bodies.

Dr Mazalan continued to brief the delegate about IDR's major events; Pangkor Dialogue and IDR Annual Research Seminar. Pangkor Dialogue is planned to be held in early September while IDR Annual Research Seminar is set to be held on 17 April 2017. CYC was invited to host a youth conference as part of Pangkor Dialogue's satellite event. CYC and its members were also invited to attend the seminar and the dialogue. At the end of the meeting, the CYC delegate and IDR exchanged name cards and proceed to tour the office. ■

Visit by Australian High Commission

10 APRIL 2017
IDR HEADQUARTERS

IDR welcomed Philip Kimpton, Counsellor, Political and Economic at Australian High Commission to its headquarters in Ipoh. Dr Mazalan Kamis was joined by Asae Sayaka, Mohd Nadzri Kamsin, Sri Devi & Hakim Baihaki. The visit to IDR and Perak was part of Kimpton's tour to promote Australia's political and economic agenda. His tour covers each state in Malaysia where he plans to meet all head of governments and state agencies.

Dr Mazalan briefed Kimpton on IDR's history and the roles as a think-tank for the Perak state government. He highlighted

some of IDR's major activities that include Pangkor Dialogue and IDR Annual Research Seminar. He also extends an invitation to the Australian High Commission to participate and partner with IDR on existing programs and activities that would bring benefit to both parties.

Kimpton thanked IDR for the warm welcome. He hoped that the Perak state government and Australian High Commission would establish more collaboration in the future in the areas of trade and education. He planned to get the private sector from Australia, especially businesses and entrepreneurs, to come to Perak and explore the state's potentials. He felt that there are many opportunities for educational institutions in Australia to get involved in Perak and boost the state's education sector.

At the end of the meeting, both parties agreed that a second round of meeting will be conducted to link Australian's exporters and education industry players with Perak's public and private sectors. The Commission has also agreed to propose a list of outstanding speakers from Australia for the upcoming Pangkor Dialogue. ■



HOW TO FARM KOI FISH IN OUR DRAINS



Months have passed since my last trip to Japan but the memory of experiencing the country's natural beauty and world-class facilities stay with me. I remember the initial surprise of seeing a school of koi fish swimming casually in the drain of Kinosaki streets, where the stream originates from spring rainwater and not polluted by other waste water. It was a thought provoking experience, where the flashes of radiant red and orange in clear water, continues to inhibit my mind long after my return.

I managed to do a quick research on the matter to learn more about it and found an interesting blog post by a Malaysian engineer who spent years living in Japan. While living in Japan, he had to adapt to the society's pristine cleanliness habit and household ethics. This includes the practice of ensuring that household wastewater is strained as much as possible to ensure that no large waste particles pollute the sewerage system. The Japanese, he said, would install a triangle-shape mesh in the drain of their kitchen sink that strain large to medium-size food waste (I was told that the strainer also works as an insect repellent). In addition, they put in another set of mesh inside the kitchen pipe, so smaller and finer food waste can be trapped, put in a dry plastic bag and then thrown into the garbage. This ensures that the wastewater remains free of debris and for the household garbage bin to be completely dry. The wastewater then flows directly into the sewerage system to be treated and reused. Having a drainage system so clean that fishes can live in it is not coincidental nor is it a mere magical swift of fate. It is the combination of comprehensive strategy initiation and efficient execution, where problems are tackled from the root instead of the symptoms. Instead of focusing on the drains, the Japanese immediately recognised that clean household wastewater will keep the drain water clear from rubbish and kitchen waste.

When addressing a problem, those responsible must strive to find the root cause instead of being swayed by the symptoms that are often more visible. The best example of this problem can be observed from our education

system. As an educator, the quality of education and the plight of students will always be my main concern. When I was in the Economic Planning Unit (EPU) under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), I did a passionate presentation on the issues affecting our national education system. I remember saying, "The heart of the problem of education in this country is the problem of the heart. The heart of education is the students and somehow we, the educators, have lost our grasp on the heart and instead spent our time, effort and money on addressing the symptoms of the problem". It is a saying I believe and hold till this day.

We have created a rat race for schools where schools compete to become exemplary or 'excellent' schools and pressure educators to focus only on high-performing students while those who struggle are left behind. Students unable to match their peers knowledge and skills are shooed aside and made to take practical courses instead. We organise as many additional classes as possible so that overburdened students will finally learn how to juggle a string of A's and redeem the school's rating in the national list. We invest in gadgets, trainings for teachers and state of the art facilities yet there are still students who lag behind the rest every year with none of the problems addressed. Our school-going children graduate without the necessary and complementary skills that can nurture them into a wholesome human being, capable of contributing greatly to the society and the people around them. When we become too exam-oriented, we lost the opportunity to shape our future leaders and policymakers to have the

right skill set and awareness to craft a better world for them.

This vicious cycle continues to run its own mill for many years and the symptoms—the declining quality of teachers, the lack of life-skills among students, oversupply and undersupply of students and graduates in various sectors—continue to dominate conversations. Apparent efforts to address the problem—in this case the symptoms—involve costly consultants and blueprints after blueprints that carry the same problem and strategies that has never been implemented properly. When it comes to implementation, we are never meticulous and instead measure our success by the production of the blueprint instead of how it is implemented. This cycle reminds me of our nature as humans; when we have a headache, we will take Panadol to end the agony, or when we suffer indigestion, we will go to the doctor to get medication or self-medicate, without knowing that they might be symptoms to a heart problem. In the end, we do not solve the problem and instead continue to apply temporary solutions, patches that only serve as temporary masks, while the cancer continues to infiltrate our system.

The Japanese takes a much longer time to come up with a plan and policy, what more a blueprint, but once the implementation stage kicks off, the action takes place systematically due to the extensive planning prior to it. There is indeed a long way for us to go when it comes to addressing the problems in our education system and in any sector for that matter. But every successful step, as the Japanese has thoughtfully practice, begins with addressing the root cause of the problem. ■