

Assalarmualaikum Wraahmatullahi Wabarakatuhu

Distinguished, honourable Guest, Professors, and students of UTHM and Myanmar Muslim Students studying in Malaysia and Singapore.

Good Morning and Welcome all of you to this important event of IIIT conference of “Towards Establishing an Integrated Educational System in Madarasas of Myanmar”

Ladies and Gentleman,

Muslims of Myanmar have been living in Myanmar for about 1000 years and have contributed to the country's development from different angles and in various areas. Their population at the end of the last Myanmar Konbong Dynasty ruled by King Tibaw was 100,000, and it became 400,000 when the country was under British colonial rule (1923-1948). The abrupt increase in the Muslim population is the arrival of Muslims from India as the colonial administration opened up thousands of job opportunities in Myanmar. The Muslims who arrived in Myanmar were experts in different professions and possessed different types of skills in various farms and businesses. Still, there were many educational experts included in the new arrivals. These educational experts in modern education and Islamic studies opened various schools in Myanmar, producing many scholars and skilled workers who participated in the nation-building process that Myanmar became the Asian tiger during 20 century.

Among those schools, Randairia High Schools and Madarasa Ilmia, the downtown of Rangoon, the capital of Myanmar, were very famous; many Muslim youths benefited from the presence of Muslim educational institutes during the colonial days. There were 45 schools belonging to the Muslim community all over Myanmar, and the government educational authority used to send its representative to monitor the qualification of the schools according to its procedure and standard. In this way, the British authorities favoured the Myanmar Muslim community as they excelled not only in the domain of education but also in politics, economics, business, social interaction, and cultural aspects.

However, there was a constant and unyielding struggle against the British government by the Burmese revolutionary members and nationalist groups, including labourers and university students, which kept disturbing the security and stability of the country. The Great Second World War in 1940 was a golden opportunity for Burmese revolutionary forces, which joined with the Japanese army marching to occupy the whole of Burma. Burman remained under Japanese rule for about five years, and the British forces regained Burman by the end of 1945. The nationalistic movement against the independence of the country continued. At the end of 1948, Burma gained independence from the British and availed democratic rule for about 14 years. Gaining freedom for Burman was indeed a disaster for the country, for the rulers of the newly independent country had a lack of experience in administering the country.

However, the people of Myanmar did not enjoy the rule of democracy; it was sabotaged by the coup d'e'tat orchestrated by General Ne Win, head of the Myanmar revolutionary council, in 1962—military rulers who only knew battling with enemies destroyed the economic status of firstly developing country. Finally, the country was bankrupt and became the poorest country in South East Asia. The high-profile country with the development of Educational institutions and success in business, trade and agricultural export has witnessed failure and

downfall due to malmanagement by inexperienced politicians and administrators. The Asian tiger, Burma, has lost everything in the hand of the regime and encountered poverty and disgrace in the face of the world.

The rulers continued to pressure the people by applying a “divide and rule policy” to control the power resulting in discrimination among religious groups, persecution of Muslims and demolishing of their religious infrastructures, and sometimes the worst criminal act of Genocide, etc. The worst-ever act of nationalization of private properties, including banking, trade, business, educational institutions, schools, colleges, factories, mills, malls, supermarkets, agriculture lands, and wholesale shops by the regime shocked the nation, particularly the Muslims because the owners of most of the properties as mentioned earlier belonged to the Muslims.

The nationalization of private schools hit the growing status of Muslim educational institutions, for the government adopted the policy of nationalistic education philosophy by obstructing the teaching of modern education in Muslim religious madrassas and the nonapplication of English medium in all schools, colleges and universities. This policy impedes the advancing educational development of Muslim youth, and there has been a sudden drop in Muslim professionals and educated personnel in government administration and business sectors. Discrimination of Religious groups and the biased attitude of majority Buddhist nations against Muslim minorities marginalise the job opportunity of Muslims in every sector of the job market and Muslim interest in the pursuit of education. The seventy years of military rule put aside the Muslim community and institutions to the extent that parents tend to send their children only to religious schools, the productivity of scholars is limited to only religious teachers from madrassas, and there are few numbers of educated Muslim professionals available in the country. Consequently, Muslims' social, political, economic, educational and technical skills have been marginalized to the extent that most Muslims are obliged to engage in petty business and shoddy work for a very low wage. In this way, the number of educated Muslims was reduced to the extent they could not handle the demanding needs of the development of Muslim society in Myanmar.

Learning basic Islamic study is compulsory for every Muslim. At the same time, they must also have professional skills by which they can develop their lives sustainably. This is why every Muslim government and community establish schools, colleges and universities where integrated knowledge, including modern and Islamic studies, are thought of simultaneously. When the education system of Muslims in Myanmar is observed, two parts of the educational establishments, one in the period of British rule and the other in the time of Myanmar military rule, is found. British rule allows Muslims to run their educational institutions according to the integrated curriculum of mixed-mode inclusive Modern education and Islamic study. But military authority does not allow Muslim madrassas teaching of integrated knowledge. In addition, the junta removed the application of English media in the universities, colleges and schools, which lowered the educational standard in the world, and the product of Myanmar graduates has no value in the job markets.