



Almarhum Dr. Hikmatullah: A Scholar of Exceptional Wisdom and Compassion

<https://news.iium.edu.my/?p=183119>

February 24, 2025

Guest Submission February 24, 2025

By, Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak

On the morning of 22nd February 2025, after returning from my morning prayers and walk, I received the sad news of Dr. Hikmatullah's passing through a message sent by Dr. Abdul Latif, who had once been his Head at the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies (FIDS). The news came as a shock to me, as I had been planning to visit him at the hospital around noon that day. As life and death are preordained by God, I, as a Muslim, must accept the reality that my honourable friend and former colleague has left this earthly life to meet his Creator. Upon hearing the sad news, I forwarded the message to his other close friends, including Dr. Abdul Salam, Dr. Shuhaimi, Dr. Mahfuth, and Dr. Ahmed El-Mogtaba.

His Farewell Departure

As the news spread through social media, that his funeral prayer would be held at the mosque at IIUM and Dr. Hikmat would be buried at the IIUM cemetery, family, friends and his former students started to assemble at the mosque area. Exactly after the Zohr prayer, the Jenazah prayer for Dr. Hikmat was led by Dr. El-Mogtaba, one of his close friends at IIUM. After that prayer, his Jenazah was put to rest amid his family, former colleagues and students. Though the weather was extremely hot, no one moved until the whole burial ceremony was over. As a final farewell to Dr. Hikmat, Dr. Mahfuth delivered a short speech on the many good things done by Dr. Hikmat to those who sought his help.



Dr. Mahfuth Delivering a Eulogy for Dr. Hikmat

The late Dr. Hikmatullah Babu Sahib, who hailed from the island nation of Singapore, settled in Malaysia through his teaching career and marriage. When I recall my long-standing friendship with Dr. Hikmat, I remember him as a truly amazing friend, Islamic scholar, and human being. Those who knew him would agree with me when I say that he was a true humanist. Imbued with all the good qualities of classical Muslim scholars, he lived a life of total dedication to serving others. He was a very caring person toward his family members, friends, and students. Once as a student studying in the West and East, Dr. Hikmat was very passionate about helping students who were facing difficulties completing their studies at IIUM, particularly those from China, India, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In recent years before his passing away, he was so involved in helping a Chinese Muslim organization spearheaded by Dr. Fatimah who graduated from the Kulliyah of Education, IIUM.



Photo of Gilgit-Baltistan

During his student years in Peshawar, Dr. Hikmat found ways to travel across to Afghanistan, Kashmir, and sometimes to Gilgit-Baltistan, which is closer to the borders of China. By adapting to the local customs and costumes of the places he visited, people accepted him as one of their own, a true son of the soil. According to him, he was deeply charmed by the magnificent beauty of the snow-capped mountains, the tribal culture, the colourful costumes, and the sincere smiles on the faces of the people he met in Pakistan, Kashmir, Afghanistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

His Education and Professional Career

Being the son of a well-known Muslim scholar named Babu Sahib in Singapore, Dr. Hikmat received his early education there. Determined to make Dr. Hikmat a scholar like himself, his father sent him to Peshawar University in Pakistan to pursue a degree in Law and Islamic Studies. Upon completing his undergraduate program, Dr. Hikmat, in his quest for a deeper understanding of Islam, pursued his Master's degree in Arts and Islamic Studies at Peshawar University. In his effort to attain his PhD, Dr. Hikmat travelled to the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, where he completed his studies in Islamic Jurisprudence in 1995. Eager to learn more from Western scholars, he travelled to Yale University in the USA, where he earned his postdoctoral fellowship in Islamic Metaphysics in 2001.

From 1995 to 1999, Dr. Hikmat served as a member of the advisory board of MUIS (Majlis Ugama Islam Singapura). In 2002, Dr. Hikmat joined the International Islamic University Malaysia, where he was attached to the Department of General Studies, now called the Department of Fundamental and Inter-Disciplinary Studies. At General Studies, he was assigned to teach all three university-required courses: The Islamic Worldview, Knowledge and Civilization in Islam, and Ethics and Fiqh of Contemporary Issues. In his long academic career, it was at IIUM that he served the longest. In addition to his teaching at IIUM, Dr. Hikmat was also made the Shariah Advisor to several financial institutions in Malaysia, including Standard Chartered Saadiq, where he served from 2005 to 2019.

After leaving IIUM in 2016, Dr. Hikmat was invited to be a visiting professor at Prince of Songkhla University, Pattani Campus, Thailand, from 2017 to 2018. Upon completing his tenure in southern Thailand, Dr. Hikmat returned to IIUM as an Academic Fellow, a position he held from 2018 to 2020. His last position at the university level, before his passing, was as the Director of Takaful Academy at Universiti Sultan Azlan Shah, Perak Darul Ridzuan, where he was conferred the title of Associate Professor.

As a well-travelled academic, Dr. Hikmat speaks several different languages, one of which is Urdu. Although he left Pakistan very long ago, he kept his relationship with many academic circles over there. He was a reviewer for the Peshawar Islamicus Journal. He used to receive many postgraduate theses from universities in Pakistan to be evaluated.

Dr. Hikmat was the Darling of Level Four (IRK Building)

During the time he was attached to FIDS, AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM, his office was located on Level Four of the IRK Building. Whenever he walked along the corridors, a loud salutation would come from other lecturers seeking his attention. Besides being an expert in Islamic Studies, Dr. Hikmat was also an expert in Area Studies. On Level Four, many academics were eager to hear his opinion on events happening in various parts of the world, particularly in the Indian subcontinent.

Dr. Hikmat was also known for his great sense of humour. He enjoyed cracking jokes and making those around him happy. Despite his jovial nature, he was a very stoic person, able to endure a great deal of pain and suffering. It was very hard for one to sense if he was going through difficult times, except for those who truly knew him in depth. True to his name, Dr. Hikmat was a beacon of knowledge and wisdom.

For all his good personality traits, generosity, and wisdom, may Allah the Almighty shower His blessings upon his blessed soul. Ameen!

(These are views of Dr. Mohd Abbas Abdul Razak who is affiliated with the Department of Fundamental and Interdisciplinary Studies at AHAS KIRKHS, IIUM which do not represent IIUM Today's.)