

## PLENARY 4

### **Syariah Compliant Milk Bank: The Need and Issues**

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World Health Organisation (WHO) defines premature infants as those babies born before the completed 37<sup>th</sup> week of pregnancy (Turner-Maffeï et al., 2014). Malaysian National Neonatal Registry (MNNR), reported an increase in the rate of premature births. This is also the trend seen worldwide. Premature babies, as they born prior to period of maturity, they are physically and physiologically still immature; their brain is immature, their eyes, their heart, their kidney, their gastrointestinal tract, their kidney and even their immune system are still very immature. Many may need admission into intensive care wards and special care nurseries to support, close monitoring and help them grow stronger. They are prone for infection, as their skin are still fragile, and they are not able to surmount an adequate immune response to fight off infection. Ensuring premature babies having access to breastmilk is of utter importance. Breastmilk has the protective capabilities such as the IgA, to prevent them from getting infections, breastmilk is more tolerable for premature babies and is proven to prevent serious diseases such as Necrotising Enterocolitis. Some mothers, however, cannot breastfeed their child and cannot supply expressed breastmilk due to various reasons. Therefore, there is a critical need for the development of milk bank. Milk Bank is not new, it is rather common in many countries. In fact, it is well established in the United States, United Kingdom and many other developed countries. The establishment of these milk banks has saved and protected the lives of newborn babies, especially the those premature. However, for Muslims, the issue arised in regards the issue of milk-kinship. The 97th Conference of the Fatwa Committee National Council for Islamic Religious Affair of Malaysia held on 15th – 17th December 2011 to forbid the establishment of milk bank in Malaysia. Thus, establishment of a syariah-compliant human milk bank is of a dire need.

**Keywords:** Milk bank; breastmilk; religion; muslim

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