

**EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY OF RESPONSE
BY THE MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS
AT THE COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY DEBATE
ON 10 / 11 MARCH 2010**

MEDIA UPDATE

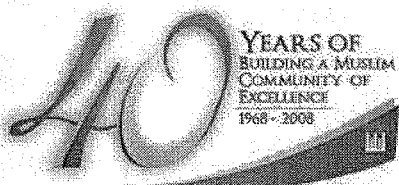
**ENHANCING THE SOCIO-RELIGIOUS WELLBEING OF THE SINGAPORE
MUSLIM COMMUNITY**

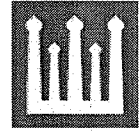
The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS) continues to facilitate and enhance the community's socio-religious life through various programmes including empowering the less fortunate, strengthening religious education and upgrading our mosques.

EMPOWER THE LESS FORTUNATE

2 The recession saw an increase in the number of needy Muslim families receiving monthly *zakat* assistance from Muis. A total of 2,122 families were assisted in 2009, as compared to 1,938 in 2008 and 1,736 in 2007. Last year, Muis expended a total of \$5.7m to assist the poor and needy, of which \$5.1m was disbursed as direct monthly cash grants, as compared to \$4.6m in 2008. The remaining \$0.6m was spent on Muis empowerment programmes, one of which is the Empowerment Partnership Scheme with a total of 403 out of 610 families (66%) empowered since its inception in 2004.

3 The Empowerment Partnership Scheme (EPS) is a targeted and holistic assistance programme for *zakat*-receiving families to assist them to become self-reliant. Through partnerships with Muslim organisations and other agencies, participants undergo training in financial management, family planning, health promotion activities over and above skills upgrading and start-up grants for small business enterprise. Please refer to Annex A for a profile of such family.





4 To further provide support and mentoring to zakat-receiving families, Muis will be expanding its Mosque Befrienders' Scheme. This scheme that was introduced in Feb 2008 now has a pool of 362 befrienders. Please see Annex B for a profile of a Mosque Befriender.

STRENGTHENING RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

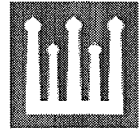
5 Since the formation of Joint Madrasah System (JMS) in 2008 to consolidate and streamline the curriculum, introduce specialization and educational pathway options, significant progress has been made to further improve leadership, operational systems, human resource scheme and the facilities of the participating madrasahs. The Joint Madrasah System is currently made up of 3 madrasah (Aljunied, Irsyad and Arabiah).

6 A key feature of JMS development is a study to review and recommend changes and enhancements on the curriculum for the pathways offered at participating madrasahs. Through latest pedagogical practices and educational technology tools, problem-based learning and project work, the religious subjects will incorporate contemporary issues and emerging trends such as Islamic banking, gender discourse, ethics and advancements in the bio-technology, among others.

7 a.L.I.V.E. is a comprehensive age-specific, part-time Islamic education programme that imparts religious education in a way that is relevant and applicable to modern life. To date, it is offered at 35 mosques and has attracted 7500 students. This is over and above the 25,000 youths that had been contacted via outreach programmes.

8 To ensure high quality of delivery of a.L.I.V.E programmes, a professional teaching standard was developed for teachers to assess and build professional knowledge and skills required at each stage of their career. For continued enhancement and quality of the a.L.I.V.E curriculum, a validation-cum-review exercise will be conducted in 2010 over a period of 2 years. Areas covered under this review exercise will include content, design and delivery, and teacher training and development.





9 Mosque Building Fund is a scheme where Muslim workers contribute monthly to build mosques in satellite housing estates in Singapore. The Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) amendment passed in 2009 allows the use of Mosque Building and Mendaki Fund (MBMF) for mosque upgrading works.

10 Given the limited funds available, MUIS has carefully prioritised the use of the Mosque Building Fund (MBF) component of the MBMF to co-fund 5 mosque upgrading projects from now till 2013. The first to benefit was Masjid Muhajirin. The other four mosques will be An-Nur, Al-Ansar, Hajjah Rahimahbi and Alkaff Upper Serangoon.

11 These mosques were selected through a building audit for all MBF mosques built in Phases 1 and 2 of the Mosque Building Programme (1977 to 1994) and non-MBF mosques not upgraded since 1990. Despite having undergone regular maintenance and repairs, these mosques have been assessed to require urgent upgrading works.

12 Projects may receive up to 80% of funding from MBMF depending on several factors. MUIS takes into account the availability of mosque sinking funds to supplement MBMF and the ability of the mosque to raise the balance required. Funds are also allocated based on project scale. Funds received should be used to meet the basic requirements as a place of worship. Upgrading or redevelopment of existing mosque buildings should increase prayer space to cater to the growing congregation and to optimise the use of available spaces.

**MAJLIS UGAMA ISLAM SINGAPURA
10 MARCH 2010**

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