

**Speech by Syed Isa Semait**  
**Appreciation Dinner for Shaikh Syed Isa Semait**  
**21 January 2011**

Honourable Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Long,

Minister of Environment and Water Resources and Minister In-Charge of Muslim Affairs,  
Dr Yaacob Ibrahim,

President of Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, Hj Mohd Alami Musa

New Mufti of Singapore Dr Muhammad Fatris Bakaram

Distinguished diplomats, religious and community leaders, respected guests, ladies and gentlemen

Assalamualaikum and a very good evening to all present.

Please Allow me to make my address first in Malay.

Seawalnya saya ingin mengucapkan setinggi tinggi terima kasih kepada Menteri kita Dr Yaacob Ibrahim kerana telah menganjurkan majlis penghargaan ini. Terima kasih juga kepada Tetamu Istimewa kita Perdana Menteri Encik Lee Hsien Loong yang sudi menghadiri majlis ini. Dan tidak lupa kepada tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sekalian. Sebenarnya pada saya majlis ini adalah untuk semua pemimpin-pemimpin agama dan para asatizah, yang dahulu dan sekarang, yang telah memainkan peranan dalam membentuk kehidupan agama yang kukuh dan harmonis.

Saya merasa amat terharu dengan pelancaran Anugerah Sarjana yang dilancarkan atas nama saya. Saya merasa ini penghargaan yang terlalu besar memandangkan saya hanya menjalankan tugas saya sebaik mungkin sebagaimana banyak lagi individu lain. Namun saya terima dengan besar hati dan semuga penerima Anugerah ini akan

membawa lebih banyak kemajuan dan peningkatan dalam kehidupan agama masyarakat dan Negara.

Saya ingin mengambil kesempatan ini untuk menyeru semua pemimpin agama dan para asatizah untuk terus memainkan yang aktif dalam memelihara keharmonian agama yang telah kita warisi selama ini. Ini adalah satu keberkahan bagi Singapura. Untuk mencapai keharmonian ini, kita mestilah memikirkan cara-cara untuk membawa rahmah dan kebaikan untuk semua dan tidak terhad kepada masyarakat atau kelompok tertentu sahaja. Ini selaras dengan tuntutan agama kita. Kita mestilah berjiwa besar dari segi kata-kata dan tindakan kita.

Sebelum saya bertutur dalam bahasa Inggeris saya ingin mengatakan dalam usaha saya dan Muis untuk membuat yang terbaik untuk masyarakat dalam kehidupan keagamaan kita, tentu sekali kita juga ada kekurangannya. Kita sentiasa alu-alukan saranan dan maklumbalas yang dapat memperbaiki lagi prestasi masyarakat kita. Namun biarlah cara kita mengajukan maklumbalas ini dalam cara yang penuh adab dan sopan. Nescaya ini akan mendatangkan kesejahteraan untuk semua.

I will now continue my address in English

1 Allow me to first express my appreciation for the tributes and efforts in organizing this special event. More importantly, I wish to thank God Almighty for His grace and mercy in guiding me during my tenure as the Mufti of the Republic Singapore. All praises are due to Him only and I am but a servant of God always striving to give my best to do what is best for the community to gain His pleasure.

2 Although this dinner is so graciously organized in my honour, I wish to share this with all of you and all those who were there with me and for me in my moments of need. It would not have been possible to do many of the things needed to be accomplished without your kind help.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3 Personally, tonight's appreciation is not only for me but rather it is a recognition of the role and contributions of our religious leaders past and present. I would also like to take this opportunities to remind our religious leaders that we have a duty to continue to take the lead in ensuring that the legacy of religious harmony in our country, continue to flourish. To do so, we need to continue to love and think of what is good for the larger humanity. Solutions that we offer in dealing with issues of religious harmony must be resolved with a magnanimous spirit. That is to say, we must not just think of what is good for our flock but also for the good of all. I firmly believe in this as it is the teaching of our beloved Prophet peace be upon him in that we must be a blessing to all humankind.

4. I must say that I am deeply touched by the gesture of naming a scholar Award after me. What I did in my 38 years was simply to discharge my responsibility of providing guidance and direction in the religious life of the community. Nothing more than that. I least expected this honour. My sincere thank to Minister Yaacob and all those responsible for this. It is my personal wish that those who will benefit from the scholarship, would continue this tradition of radiating compassion, spreading peace and realising harmony in every possible manifestation.

5 We are most fortunate that we have a government that appreciates and embraces the positive role of religion in developing a gracious and harmonious society. Religious leaders should therefore stand together in unison to safeguard and treasure this unique philosophy of the government. This point is very important in view of the challenges that many communities around the world faces when it comes to religious harmony.

6. I must admit that I would be nowhere without Muis. I have had the privilege of serving the community through Muis for the last 38 years. Under its various leaders, Muis has grown to be an established religious institution. Through its range of services it continuous to strive to serve the socio-religious needs of the community in the best way it can. With the strong support of the community and relentless efforts of its staff,

Muslims in Singapore are able to lead a peaceful and progressive religious life. This in turns helps our Muslim community to be able to preserve its Muslim identity and belief while at the same tome contributing to the well being of the nation.

7 It is for this that I view Muis as a ni'mah or blessing and this blessing will only last for as long as it is collectively enjoyed and serves the community needs. This ni'mah or blessing needs to be cherished and nurtured further. I am the first to admit that we may have our shortcomings. And therefore at Muis we always welcome ideas, proposals, and comments on how we can continue to enhance the religious life of the community. Having said that, I believe we should try to offer these views in a gracious way. There are many channels to offer these feedback. Together we can do more and better.

8. Finally I pray that Allah s.w.t, God Almighty will bestow upon the Singaporean community success, happiness and prosperity. May Allah grant our leaders the strength, wisdom and perseverance to provide the best for our community and society. Wabillahi taufiq walhidayah wassalamualaikum warahmatullahi wabarakatuh.