

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF MUIS
HJ MOHD ALAMI MUSA
AT MUIS TEA RECEPTION-CUM
PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE
ON SAT, 23 JULY 2011
AT THE REGENT**

Yang Amat Berhormat
Presiden S R Nathan & Puan Nathan

Yang Berhormat
Menteri Penerangan, Perhubungan & Seni
Merangkap Menteri Hal Ehwal Masyarakat Islam
Dr Yaacob Ibrahim

Dhaif-Dhaif Terhormat
Duta-Duta Besar and Pesuruh Jaya

Para Anggota Parlimen

Sohibus Samaha Mufti

Tuan-Tuan & Puan-Puan sekalian

Assalamualaikum wr wb & Salam Sejahtera

Saya ingin mengucapkan selamat datang kepada Tuan-tuan dan Puan-puan. Terima kasih kerana sudi menghadiri acara Jamuan Teh Muis pada petang ini.

2 Bagi pihak Muis, saya ingin mengucapkan setinggi-tinggi penghargaan kepada masyarakat Islam Singapura kerana telah memberi kepercayaan dan sokongan padu. Ini telah membolehkan kami memberi khidmat secara terbaik kepada masyarakat. Walau pun begitu, saya pasti

tidak semua yang dilakukan Muis dapat memuaskan hati semua. Kami percaya terdapat ruang di mana pembaikan boleh dilakukan. Kami akan terus berusaha untuk memperbaiki diri di mana terdapat kelemahan.

3 Alhamdulillah, sejak kewujudan Muis selama empat dekad, banyak kejayaan telah dikecapi. Kejayaan-kejayaan ini bukanlah hanya milik Muis tetapi milik semua pihak, termasuk para asatizah, para pemimpin agama, masyarakat serta warga masjid dan madrasah.

4 Muis mengambil sikap terbuka untuk mendapatkan buah fikiran dari pelbagai golongan masyarakat. Sikap terbuka ini ditanamkan dalam ethos kerja warga Muis. Tiga nilai teras (“core values”) yang diutamakan ialah – integriti, inklusif dan konsultatif. Dengan ethos kerja ini kami kerap mendapat maklumbalas dan buah fikiran. Misalnya, kami telah menggunakan maklumbalas para ibu-bapa, pelajar dan asatizah untuk memperbaiki sistem pendidikan Islam sambilan aLIVE. Terdapat banyak lagi bidang tugas di mana Muis bersikap inklusif dan konsultatif untuk mendapatkan cadangan-cadangan dari pihak-pihak yang mempunyai kepentingan (stakeholders).

5 Kami akan terus menjaring rapat dengan masyarakat dan bersikap terbuka untuk mendapatkan maklumbalas dan buah fikiran. InsyaAllah, kerjasama ini

akan dapat menghasilkan yang terbaik untuk membangunkan kehidupan sosio-agama yang kukuh lagi mendalam. Tuan-tuan dan puan-puan sekalian, izinkan saya untuk meneruskan ucapan saya ini dalam bahasa Inggeris.

1 The Muis Tea Reception is a special occasion. Since it started 33 years ago, the Muis Tea Reception has been graced by our Head of State, The President of the Republic of Singapore. This year, the Muis Tea Reception is extra special. This is the last Muis Tea Reception that HE Mr S R Nathan will attend as the President of Singapore. President has announced that he will be retiring from office.

2 HE President S R Nathan has Muis and the Singapore Muslim community close to his heart. You can feel this by how warmly our President interacts with the community and hear the kind words that he uttered about local Muslims. On behalf of Muis, I like to express our deepest gratitude to HE President S R Nathan for obliging, without hesitation, to grace the Muis Tea Reception, since the last 12 years.

3 Muis has existed as a Statutory Board and as an Islamic Authority for about four decades.

4 In its 40 years of existence, Muis has managed to forge a close relationship with the Muslim community based on trust and confidence. With this trust and confidence, we're able to provide a whole range of relevant services needed by the community. This will be delivered professionally and with high standards of service.

5 These were achievements in the earlier years. These are our strengths which we are now capitalizing on these achievements to further consolidate its role to serve the community and enrich its socio-religious life by strengthening existing institutions, building new institutions and institutionalizing key initiatives. Allow me to elaborate.

Strengthening of Existing Institutions

6 As you know, mosques and madrasah are important community institutions that pre-existed Muis.

7 For the last 10 years or so, four (4) new MBMF mosques were built and 18 existing mosques have been upgraded. Besides maintaining high standards of architectural attainments and infra-structural

developments, we are further strengthening mosques by making them family, community and youth friendly. Our mosques today are more inclusive, open to all and able to deliver more effective programs to more people. However, they do not function in isolation. They position themselves as a dynamic part of the larger Singaporean society. They are also playing an active role to alleviate the social challenges of disadvantaged families living in the vicinity of mosques. Moreover, mosques today project themselves as “hip and happening” to attract the young. Ladies and gentlemen, our mosque leaders are not resting on their laurels. They continue to seek better ways to increase the effectiveness of mosques in “Changing Lives, Enhancing Spirituality and Guiding Community in an increasingly challenging world”. They will be doing this through the coming Mosque Convention to be held in December this year. The Mosque Convention 2011 will chart the direction of mosques in Singapore for the next five years, will develop a plan of action, and further strengthen them as an important religious institution.

8 I like to now touch on our madrasah as another important institution. We have further strengthened madrasah through the launch of the JMS – Joint Madrasah System. Through such a joint project, we are optimizing the use of limited community resources to

deliver an enriched, integrated and updated Islamic curriculum. We have also embarked on an aggressive program in the last few years to train all our teachers to possess the professional teacher qualifications. We are not stopping here. From teacher training, we are now moving to leadership development. Some 50 senior teachers will start a “Leaders in Education” development program starting early next year. With such heavy investment, we hope that our madrasah will be an institution that the community can be proud of.

Building New Institutions

9 Let me now share with you new institutions that we are building. As the socio-religious life of the community is dynamic and given the ever changing context of life in a constantly evolving world that we live in, Muis needs to build new institutions to cater to the emerging needs of the community. One such new institution is the Muis Academy.

10 As Muis has adopted a conscious policy of actively developing capacity in the socio-religious sector, we set up the Muis Academy in 2006 to spearhead all training efforts. For example, a batch of 50 asatizah are now undergoing an advanced training program so that they can become more effective religious leaders, guiding the

community's religious life within the modern world. Muis Academy has also embarked on an active program to popularize a progressive discourse on Islam through collaborations with renowned scholars on Islam and overseas academic institutions.

11 Going beyond the Muslim community to reach out to other Singaporeans, Muis has set up the Harmony Centre in 2006, a new institution to be the driver of social trust building and inter-faith engagements. Now into its fifth year already, Harmony Centre is being recognized as a useful platform for inter-faith goodwill building and an icon that portrays Singapore's harmonious multi-religious living. The Harmony Centre is being upgraded now. A new feature will be an additional section, "Islam and Inter-Faith", and this section will present scriptural and historical materials as well as traditional sources to project that the inter-faith ethos is very much rooted in Islam.

12 And to touch hearts and enrich lives of people, regardless of race and religion beyond the shores of Singapore, we launched the Rahmatan Lil Alamin (Blessings for All) Foundation that embodies the Singapore Muslim Community's ethos of spreading blessings to all. This is a small contribution by Singaporean Muslims to project the "smiling face of Islam"

to the world. Since these efforts were launched, \$2 million had been donated to the victims of disasters in some 12 countries. Over the last one year, the Foundation has funded 5 humanitarian projects to benefit disadvantaged communities in this region.

Institutionalising Important Initiatives

13 There are also a number of initiatives that are important to the Singapore Muslim community. Besides strengthening existing institutions and building new ones, Muis, since the last few years, has institutionalised important initiatives to ensure that the continued implementation will be sustained, over time.

14 For example, the use of zakat money to empower the poor and needy to be self-reliant and not dependent on financial hand-outs forever has been successfully institutionalized within the framework of Muis Help Program. Since the institutionalization of the empowerment strategy, 66% of such families have become self-reliant.

15 The other initiative which is much welcomed by the community and the asatizah fraternity is our institutionalization of the recognition scheme for asatizah. Asatizah found that the Asatizah Recognition Scheme

has been useful to enhance the professional standing of the fraternity. The community also gets guidance on their selection of properly qualified religious teachers. Now, Muis is consulting the asatizah fraternity on how the Asatizah Recognition Scheme can be further enhanced to better serve the asatizah and the community.

16 Another key initiative that we have institutionalized is the part-time Islamic education for the young that had been totally revamped. We institutionalized it in the form of a program called aLIVE (about Living Islamic Values Everyday). It is a unique program of teaching Islam to the Young in unconventional ways – ie through experiential learning, interactive methods and use of materials that is age-appropriate and contemporary. International Islamic scholars have validated aLIVE as an adequate baseline Islamic education program. Parents acknowledged that their children are now more motivated to learn about Islam. Nevertheless, we are now looking into ways to improve this Islamic Education Program. For example, we are thinking of introducing more contemporary issues into the curriculum as there is a desire by our youths to discuss them from a religious perspective.

17 Finally, to deliver all that I have mentioned earlier, we require a strong organization. We have therefore made the pursuit of organizational excellence a

foundation of Muis' existence as a Statutory Board, within the Singapore civil service, as a world class civil service. We institutionalize this pursuit for excellence through national quality recognition schemes. Muis has been recognized as a People Developer Standards (PDS) organization, a Service Excellence (S-Class) organization and a Singapore Quality Class (SQC) organization. These are national quality frameworks that guide Muis to pursue organizational excellence.

Conclusion

18 Excellencies, distinguished, ladies and gentlemen, allow me to conclude. The building of new institutions, the strengthening of existing institutions and the institutionalizing of important initiatives are important for any organization like Muis that plays a public role. Maintaining institutions to remain strong will enable Muis to sustain its relevance over time.

19 But at the heart of these institutions are the dedicated staff and volunteers, such as the 6 extraordinary individuals who we are honouring this afternoon for the Muis Awards

20 I would like to take this opportunity to thank them for their outstanding and selfless contributions to the Singapore Muslim community.

21 On that note, I like to end my speech and hope all of you will have a pleasant afternoon.