

Speech By Chairman RLAF Board of Trustees at RLA Day 2011

Our Guest of Honour, Minister for Education, Mr Heng Swee Keat;

Minister for Information, Communication and The Arts and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim;

Muis President, Hj Mohamed Alami Musa;

Mufti of Singapore, Dr Mohd Fatris Bakaram;

Members of the Muis Council;

Mosque, Community and Faith Leaders;

Our Honoured Guests;

Assalamualaikum and a very good afternoon to all;

Ladies and Gentlemen:

1. It has been two years since the Foundation was officially launched by the Prime Minister in 2009. The work of the Foundation, in reflecting the Muslim ethos of Rahmatan Lil Alamin, has been slow, but surely been gaining momentum on two fronts – both the grant making function as well as the continuing initiatives of the Mosque Community.

Thanking the Mosque Community

2. Here I must issue a word of thanks to Hj Paiman and the Mosque Committee. The work they have done over the years has been inspirational in reflecting the spirit and ethos of the Rahmatan Lil Alamin, i.e. blessings to all. They have given a platform for the Muslim community to reflect its care and concern for mankind in times of need, and have built up a niche identity for the Rahmatan Lil Alamin brand, i.e. the face of humanitarianism for the Singaporean Muslim Community when there are communities around the world in crisis and in desperate need due to calamities and natural disaster.

3. Through collections at Friday prayers' congregation, the community has selflessly contributed to various humanitarian relief efforts all over the world such as for the 2004 Asian Tsunami, earthquakes in South Asia, Indonesia and China, cyclone in Myanmar, floods in the Philippines and Yemen, typhoon in Taiwan as well as victims of the crisis in the Palestinian territory of Gaza. The latest contribution was for the relief efforts in Japan, through Mercy Relief, after the devastating earthquake and Tsunami there. The Rahmatan Lil Alamin Foundation will continue to provide this platform for the community.

Developing Capabilities in Youth

4. Ladies and Gentlemen, we are fortunate to have a Board of Trustees from various segments of the community, as well as the support of Muis in our initial conception. We feel fortunate to be able to leverage on the strengths of the community, which has thus far been ably channelled by a key community institution, the mosque fraternity, in one niche area, humanitarian aid for crisis-ridden communities.

5. In addition to this, the Foundation has been working hard on its second front, as a grant making organisation, whose primary role is to empower the community to reflect the ethos of blessings to all. We are now starting to see positive results in our other focus, develop new capabilities within the community, particularly within the youth.

6. By new capabilities, I mean not only the desire but also the capacity to be able to perform humanitarian as well as developmental works for needy communities. We are a firm believer in sustainability. We would also like to be able to encourage the manifestation of blessings and compassion across all communities, both as givers and as receivers. We firmly believe the promotion of inter-faith harmony is not only desirable but a necessary component of the ethos of Rahmatan Lil Alamin. Thus we have included these elements as essential criteria into the projects which we are looking to fund.

7. We have been working to complement existing national schemes and platforms which are already contributing to the ends which we seek to achieve. These include school schemes which encourage the spirit of volunteerism and humanitarianism. I mention schools because we have a vision of a pool of inspired and dedicated youth who are able to mobilise resources such as the foundation, and possess the organisational skills to put together and in carrying out meaningful projects to reflect the spirit of blessings to all. We are now starting to have some small successes.

Small Successes – Regardless of Faith

8. Ladies and Gentlemen, I am very happy to report how we have found groups of passionate young ladies and gentlemen in our tertiary institutions, the Nanyang Technological University, the Singapore Management University and the National University of Singapore, who are well and truly on the path of volunteerism. Last year we supported three projects, one in Yunnan, China, one in Noida, India and one in Battambang, Cambodia. What the groups do is typically help in the reconstruction of a madrasah, including the setting up of libraries as well as computer laboratories. The students have also conducted classes teaching basic language and computer skills, as well as health and hygiene.

9. This year we saw the completion of two more projects, one in Xinjiang, China and one in West Java, Indonesia. An added element for the project in Xinjiang was the imparting of basic skills to help the community build up its tourism industry so as to help develop the local economy. The team also helped to create an internet presence for the community to promote awareness as well as visitorship.

10. In all of these projects, the emphasis has been on creating **a sustainable difference** in the lives of the communities they have sought to help. Very shortly you will be treated to a little multimedia on these projects. What I find truly heartwarming is that these teams

are made up of youth from **various ethnic and faith communities**, not only from the Muslim community. This is truly a reflection of how such noble humanitarian work transcends race or creed.

Sustainability – An Alumni

11. I am also happy to report that we have begun to include a pool of **madrasah students**, as well as **mosque youth leaders**, who are also inspired to help others in need. We are slowly developing a critical mass of youth who can start to create a **self-sustaining ecology** of volunteers ready, willing and able to propagate the spirit of Blessings-to-All. With this in mind, the Foundation is also looking at **developing an alumni** of volunteers, who can impart their experiences, share their skills and inspire the next generation of youth. A pool such as this will be the real and most effective way forward in manifesting the ethos of Rahmatan Lil Alamin, and will be the legacy that the foundation hopes to build, Insya Allah. We look forward to building on these baby steps and fulfilling the vision of the Foundation. Thank you.

12. Wabillahaufiq Wal Hidayah. Wassalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh.