

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF MUIS
HJ MOHD ALAMI MUSA
AT THE WAKAF DISBURSEMENT CEREMONY
20 SEP 2011**

The Singapore Muslim community can take pride that even though we are small in number, we are well endowed with assets. The assets include wakaf properties. Wakaf properties exist in perpetuity. They are meant to be used for charitable, pious and religious purposes. Wakaf can be privately managed by Trustees. But many are managed by Muis. The income derived from the wakaf can be for specific benefits of individuals or organizations in the community as provided for in the trust deeds. Or they can be for the general benefit of the Malay/Muslim community. Wakaf provides a ready and continuous source of income. This income brings immense benefit to the community in general and to mosques and madrasahs that are named as specific beneficiaries in the deeds.

2 Our older generation mosques bequeathed by our early pioneering philanthropists are also assets of the community. They are now supplemented with 23 new generation mosques which we built using the Mosque Building Fund. The MBF is akin to a kind of wakaf contributed by all of us. We can be said to own “real estate” in the form of wakaf properties, mosques and madrasahs - many of which are sitting on freehold land. Besides these immovable assets, the community also owns liquid assets in the form of mosque funds, zakat funds and Baitulmal funds. Hence, overall, we can say that the Singapore Muslim community is blessed with assets that generate sources of funds to support its socio-religious development.

3 I am happy to say that as Singaporeans, Muslims are diligent, disciplined and dedicated (the 3 'D's) to ensure that our assets are well taken care of. The portfolio of 189 wakaf properties continuously generate revenue for us.

4 I am pleased to state that we have allocated \$3.08 million of wakaf revenue for disbursement this year. This amount is 39% higher than that disbursed last year.

5 We, in Singapore, do not let our wakaf properties lie idle and have introduced many creative ways of ensuring better returns of our assets. Through the effective tripartite collaborations amongst the Trustees, Warees and Muis, we ensure that our wakaf properties are "productive".

6 For properties that are less productive, we renew or refurbish them so that they can fetch higher rents. One example is the row of shop houses (the famous murtabak joints) opposite Sultan Mosque. We refurbish them and are then able to charge higher rents. For properties that cannot really yield higher rents, our Fatwa Committee, had in 1992 issued a fatwa allowing us to sell off the properties and use the sale proceeds to purchase new free-hold properties which are then declared as wakaf. This is called the ("istibdal") or "wakaf assets migration" fatwa. When we shared this fatwa with other countries during the International Wakaf Conference in Singapore in 2007, they regarded our fatwa as a progressive and useful reference for other countries. An example of wakaf assets migration is our sale of 45 several poor yielding awqaf properties and using the sales

proceeds in the purchase of the building at 11 Beach Road. Regarded as one of our main wakaf assets, this building which is beside Raffles Hotel is now worth much more than the purchase price.

7 Our trustees, Warees and Muis will continue to exercise prudence, wisdom and due diligence in managing our wakaf properties so that they will continue to provide a steady stream of revenue needed by the community.

8 The revenue must be channeled to uses or purposes that are defined in the Trust deeds. Muis has a duty to ensure that the intent of our wakifs who had set up the wakafs are diligently adhered to. Allow me to state some of the ways in which we have used wakaf revenue according to the trust deed.

9 Helping the poor and needy is quite commonly defined as the objective of wakafs. An example is the wakaf in the vicinity of Sultan Mosque. Part of the revenue of this wakaf must be used to feed the poor and needy in the neighbourhood of the mosque. Another example is the wakaf Shariffah Zain Alsharoff Alsagoff that is meant to fund for the provision of medicines to the sick and poor, regardless of race or religion. Not known to many, there is also a wakaf known as Wakaf Kallang Malay Burial Ground, whose revenue is dedicated for use for burial of the destitute and the poor. Furthermore, assistance to the poor and needy is not confined locally. We have wakafs that specify the use of these revenues to assist the poor in other countries like India, Yemen and Saudi Arabia.

10 The other broad objective of quite a number of wakaf is to support our religious institutions like mosques and madrasahs. The money can be used for the development of infra-structure or meeting operational expenditure.

11 There are also many wakafs that do not specify the use of the revenue. They generally require that the revenue generated be used for charitable purposes. Here, the money is used for the development of the community which includes part-time Islamic education, asatizah development, religious development and other socio religious aspects. Here, Muis is advised by a wakaf disbursement committee comprising Muis council members to allocate wakaf funds to support projects that develop the Singapore Muslim community.

12 I would like to make something clear at this juncture. There are wakafs whose revenues cannot be fully disbursed to the beneficiaries. This is because such wakafs need to pay off the loans that they had taken from Baitulmal. We have used Baitulmal money to advance for expenditures needed to upgrade or refurbish the properties under the wakaf concerned. These properties need to be refurbished to fetch higher rents. Although the wakafs benefited from higher incomes (due to the upgrading projects), the nett disbursed to the beneficiaries can be much less than the gross income generated as a result of loan re-payments. An example is the Wakaf Jamae, for which the beneficiaries are Al-Abrar Mosque, Jamae Chulia Mosque and the Nagore Dargha. Jamae Chulia

mosque will receive a very high amount of money this year because they have re-paid their loan to Baitulmal.

13 In conclusion, let me reiterate that wakaf is an important religious institution for the Singapore Muslim community. We have been blessed with many wakaf that were set up as early as in the 19th century by philanthropic, forward looking and God-fearing Muslims. Insya Allah Muis will ensure that these wakaf are properly managed and fulfill the noble intentions of the wakifs. We will continue to carry this amanah in the best possible ways.

14 Warees, as a subsidiary of Muis, is embarking on a study, jointly with Muis, on all our wakaf properties. The end goal is to enhance the potential of our wakaf to produce good yields. This will ultimately benefit all of us as a community. Muis will endeavour to run a highly professional, productive and exemplary system of wakaf management in Singapore for the benefit of the community.

Thank You.