

SPEECH OF CHAIRMAN OF ASATIZAH RECOGNITION BOARD
Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamed

2019 Hari Raya Gathering with Asatizah
Tuesday, 2 July 2019 | Temasek Club

The Honourable Mufti of Singapore,
The Honourable Deputy of Mufti of Singapore,
Members of the Asatizah Recognition Board,
Respected Asatizah,
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. First and foremost, allow me to express utmost gratitude to Allah s.w.t for His grace and mercy upon us all. Alhamdulillah (*all praises to Allah*), we have successfully performed our fasting month and now we have reached the end of the month of Syawal. I pray that all our good deeds are accepted by Allah s.w.t and are given limitless rewards. I would also like to wish everyone a blessed Eid – may we be among those who have happy returns; may you be well with every passing year; may Allah accept all our good deeds.

LATEST DEVELOPMENT ON ARS

Respected Asatizah,

2. This is the second year of Asatizah Hari Raya celebrations held together with the Mufti of Singapore and Singapore's senior asatizah. The main objective of this Hari Raya gathering is to strengthen the bonds between local asatizah. As the saying goes – united we stand, divided we fall. We intend for the asatizah to unite and work together

in strengthening the institution of Asatizah. This is in line with our efforts to develop a progressive religious life and form an excellent Muslim community in Singapore.

3. Since the ARS became mandatory in 2017, the number of registered asatizah now stands at 4,549 (consisting of 2,610 Asatizah and 1,939 Quranic Teachers). In the beginning of the establishment of ARS in 2006, there were only about 500-600 registered asatizah. My colleagues in the Asatizah Religious Board (ARB) and I are grateful to see such positive development and a promising trend. The community now has better access to more highly-educated asatizah recognized by the ARS. I believe that the increase in the number of asatizah will boost the effort to develop a more refined religious life as well as religious thought that are in line with the atmosphere of modern life in Singapore and the world today.

LIFETIME LEARNING AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT: *MINAL MAHDI ILAL LAHDI* (FROM THE CRADLE TO THE GRAVE)

4. In contrast with the accreditation schemes of religious teachers in other countries, ARS gives special attention to self-development and asatizah training. This is one of the most important features of this scheme with the objective of building capabilities and empowering personalities. As you may have known, each asatizah is required to fulfil 30 hours of Continuous Professional Education (CPE) throughout a 3-year period of recognition. The development of asatizah is the core and priority of ARS so that asatizah get to constantly enhance their knowledge and skills, treading the footsteps of the scholars (*ulama*) and the prophets (*anbiya'*) – they did not bequeath wealth, but troves of knowledge. If we aspire to be the heirs of the prophets, we as asatizah can never feel comfortable with only the knowledge that we currently possess. The spirit

of lifelong learning (*minal mahdi ilal lahdi; from the cradle to the grave*) should be applied in life in order to refine our conduct and etiquettes, which are indeed the tradition (*sunnah*) of the prophets. This is what we aspire to build and develop through the Asatizah Recognition Scheme. However, knowledge and skills alone are inadequate. Asatizah need to apply knowledge in accordance with the socio-religious and multicultural context of Singapore.

5. Ever since ARS has become a compulsory scheme in 2017 until now, we have been able to provide various forms of training and development programs for our asatizah. We have offered 168 CPE training programs that consist of Islamic Education and Thought, Counselling, History and Islamic Civilization, Bioethics and Fatwa, Islamic Banking and Finance, and many more. This also includes 16 compulsory programs related to the Asatizah Code of Ethics. Overall, there are 13,911 training sites and 751 hours of CPE training that have been offered.

6. However, I would like to share the ARB's concern today. We find that there are 974 Asatizah and Al-Quran teachers who have yet to attend any self-development program.

As such, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage and call upon the asatizah to attend the CPE training and programmes that are planned by the ARS Office and the Secretariat of Singapore Islamic Scholars & Religious Teachers Association (PERGAS).

7. I would like to emphasize the importance of Asatizah's attendance in such development and training programmes. Asatizah need to remain relevant and credible with accurate knowledge, high self-esteem and virtuous so that they may be respected and cherished. Additionally, it should also be made clear that any asatizah who does

not fulfil the 30 CPE hours by the end of 2019 will have their ARS re-accreditation process affected.

8. Besides the scheduled CPE training programs, the ARB/ARSO are also working to launch online learning programmes. This effort will make it more convenient for asatizah to learn and pursue CPE courses on-the-go, wherever they may be. For the initial phase, the Secretariat will launch the Code of Ethics (COE) seminar online. More information about this programme will be shared soon.

DUTY OF THE PROPHETS, MANNERS OF THE PROPHETS

9. Besides developing asatizah's capabilities through the enhancement of knowledge and skills, asatizah also need to ensure that their values, identity and conduct as teachers or religious leaders are maintained and preserved. The Islamic knowledge and ethics of an ustaz or an ustazah will distinguish himself or herself in the sight of Allah and society.

10. If we are going to be worthy of being regarded the Inheritors of the Prophets (*Warathatul Anbiya*) who uphold their duty, then the conduct and values of the prophets (*Anbiya*) need to emanate in every action in our daily lives. We cannot afford to fail in carrying out this sacred duty. We are obliged to carry it out with dedication and humility as we continue to tread the path of the prophets. Furthermore, we cannot allow the reputation of Singapore's institution of scholars and asatizah to be tarnished because of the errors and misdeeds of the few.

11. Therefore, I would like to call upon all Asatizah to reflect upon ourselves as part of the spiritual training we have undergone during Ramadhan. We have to instil good values and the spiritual training in our hearts and ourselves. It is impossible to educate

and transform our society if we do not succeed in educating and transforming ourselves first.

CONCLUSION

12. Hopefully this Hari Raya gathering will be a stepping stone for us to strengthen the bonds among us and enhance the institution of Asatizah, in line with the theme of our celebration this year – Together Empowering the Institution of Asatizah (*Bersama Memperkasa Institusi Asatizah*).

13. I also hope this event will infuse a new spirit in us to continue providing meaningful religious education, guidance and advice in accordance with the current context, as well as to uphold the values of our prophets. This is our sacred duty that as asatizah in Singapore. We must safeguard this duty in the best possible way and defend it from adverse external elements.

Thank you and Wassalam.