

**SPEECH BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF MUIS HJ ABDUL RAZAK MARICAR
AT MOSQUE INVESTITURE AND MODS GRADUATION
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Muis Council Members, Mosque Veteran Leaders

Mosque Management Boards

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum Wr Wb

1 Alhamdulillah, with the grace of Allah SWT, today we will be witnessing a total of 147 volunteers from 13 mosques from the South East Mosque Cluster (or SEMC) receiving their appointment letters as members of the mosque management boards (or MMBs). I would like to express my appreciation to all who have come forward to contribute as MMBs. Let us congratulate them on their appointment!

Our Mosque Management Board (MMB) – Our Assets

Dear Mosque leaders

2 Our mosque is an important institution. While we are building more mosques and upgrading existing mosques to cater to the demand for more prayer spaces, it is actually the people who serve in the mosque who will make our mosques transformational touch-points for our community. You are the pillars of our mosques. Each of you has a very important role to play in ensuring that our mosques are vibrant nodes in the community that can serve our socio-religious needs.

Building our Human Capital Capabilities

3 To ensure this, Muis has been investing heavily in the people who serve our mosques. In the last 4M3YP, we had seen significant achievements in terms of human capital development for mosque MMBs and staff. We will continue with this in the 5M3YP Plan to ensure that all our mosque staff and volunteers are equipped with the necessary skills and competencies. As leaders, we need to be confident to shape the religious agenda of our community in tandem with the progressive religious thinking which is suited for Singapore's multi-racial, multi-religious context. In consultation with Office of the Mufti, we must be able to evaluate critically content that is necessary to enrich the religious thinking of our community. We must be careful not to blindly import religious thinking which may not suited to our local context.

4 Under the Muis' Mosque Capabilities Development Framework, all of you will be invited to undergo the Administration of Mosque and Leadership Programme, or, in short, AMAL to equip you with the necessary skills and knowledge in administration and management as Mosque Management Board members.

Mosque Officers Development Scheme – Graduation

5 Alhamdulillah, today we will also witness the graduation of 59 mosque officers who participated in the training programme leading to the Certificate in Mosque Management (CMM). This includes one batch at the Supervisory level. All in all, 8 batches of 217 mosque officers have graduated since 2013 when the scheme started. I hope they will put what they have learnt to good use. Insya Allah, we hope to provide another 3 runs of the Mosque Officers Development Scheme by the end of the year.

Strategic Leadership Programme (SLP)

6 Muis also emphasises the development of our volunteer mosques leaders who hold key positions as well as mosque staff who have shown high potential. The Strategic Leadership Programme (SLP) is designed to develop our mosques leaders as organisational and community leaders. I am glad to mention that the second batch of 24 mosques leaders/staff is still currently undergoing SLP. With this, there will be 49 mosque leaders who would have benefitted from the programme. Insyah Allah, we plan to invite another batch later this year to cover all those who hold key leadership positions in our mosques.

Muslimahs in MMB

7 Alhamdulillah, increasingly, we are seeing more Muslimahs coming forward to serve on the Mosque Management Board. About 15% of our current MMB members are ladies. I am pleased to note that there are 24 Muslimahs in MMBs in SEMC today, making up about 16.3% of those appointed this time. I am heartened to note that five of them are serving in senior positions as Key Appointment Holders. In the last March 2015 appointment, I announced two Muslimahs who were appointed as Vice Chairperson II. This time, we have one more who has joined as Vice Chairperson II. She is Mdm Hjh Maimunah Kemat of Al-Ansar Mosque. I strongly believe there will be more Muslimahs in the future holding key positions in MMBs.

Dear Mosque Leaders

8 Recently, in the annual Work Plan Seminar, Muis shared its 5th 3-year plan. The plan charts Muis' various efforts to implement relevant programmes, including Islamic Learning and Social Development programme for the community. This can only be achieved

through close collaboration with our partners and stakeholders, especially our mosques. In the three year tenure of your appointment, I look forward to your mosques' 3-year Action Plans being aligned with the Mosque Convention 2011 (or MC11) as well as the 5M3YP. May I suggest that you give special focus to three areas. They are first, Islamic Education for the Young; second, Outreach to the Poor; and third, Needy and Strengthening Governance. I will touch on each of these priorities, in turn.

IE for the Young which is suited for Singapore's Context

9 Our first focus is in the area of Islamic education. Alhamdulillah, mosque madrasah aLIVE programmes conducted at 36 mosques have shown a steady increase in enrolment. Today, we have more than 18,000 students. But we need to intensify our efforts to reach out to more of our youth who currently are not benefiting from Islamic Education. To do this, I urge our mosques to strengthen outreach efforts with partners such as the private operators (PIENet)¹ as well as MMOs and IMO's to reach out to both youths as well as their parents.

10 And while we are encouraging our young to attend Islamic education programmes, I would like to propose that our mosques also encourage the parents to update or refresh their Islamic knowledge continuously. This is especially at a time when we are witnessing increasing interest amongst adults to also learn more about religion. Our religious leaders have the duty to ensure that they are properly guided by our asatizah who are cognisant of our Singaporean society's context. This is what the Adult Islamic Learning at mosques or ADIL programme has been doing since the last three years. Alhamdulillah, with the support of 15 mosques, we have attracted more than 5,000 participants mostly ranging between 25-39 years old. We hope that with this, the culture of learning Islam that takes into

¹ PIENet (Private Islamic Education Network) formed in 2013 to cater to the needs of Islamic Education for the Young by the Private operators. Members include Andalus, Cordova, MWAS and many others.

consideration Singapore's multi-cultural society will continue to be propagated actively by our mosques in the coming years.

Outreach to the Poor & Needy

11 Next, we must always focus on the support for the less privileged families in our community. Last year, Muis has revised our eligibility criteria and zakat quantum so that more aid can be given to more people. Annually, MUIS helps an average of 5,300 recipients through our zakat financial assistance. These families can leverage on a range of support, including monthly cash assistance and food vouchers, as well as one-off assistance to pay for arrears on their utilities and other educational support. Our mosques also serve as a centre for zakat recipients to attend core developmental programmes ranging from Islamic education to important life-skills aimed at building the families' resilience. Importantly, our mosques also need to refer zakat applicants to the Social Service Offices, where they can tap on national programmes. This is part of our holistic approach in supporting our beneficiaries.

12 In addition, under the Mosque Befrienders Scheme, befrienders are trained to provide support and befriending services for beneficiaries, such as the aged, chronically ill and disabled. The Befrienders provide emotional support to our beneficiaries, including regular home visits. These efforts have made a huge difference to improving the lives of our beneficiaries. The EMCs, currently comprise 721 Befrienders, of which 565 (78%) of them are trained. I hope our mosques can continue to recruit more volunteers to provide the necessary support for our long-term zakat recipients and nurture a more caring and active Muslim community.

Governance

13 Our third key priority is in the area of Good Governance. It is our *amanah* to ensure that good governance is upheld by our mosque leaders and staff. It is with good governance that our mosques and mosque leaders continue to enjoy the trust and confidence of the community. Muis has completed a review of the Mosque Financial Regulations. We will continue to strengthen our mosque governance capabilities by offering Mosque Financial Regulation & Governance training for mosques staff and MMBs.

Conclusion – Enduring Legacy by Pioneer Mosque Leaders

14 As we celebrate the appointment of new MMB members today, we should always remember our pioneer mosque leaders who had led and served our mosque. I would like to take this moment to honour Almarhum Hj Md Ariff Ahmad who, last week was called to return to Allah, the Most Compassionate. He was a pioneer MMB, involved in the JPM of Al Muttaqin and subsequently served on Al-Muttaqin Mosque Management Board. There were also many others before us who had served our mosques and who had passed on. They have built their enduring legacy through their relentless effort to contribute at our mosques. They have built very strong foundations in our mosques. So let us work to further build upon the foundation they have laid out for us. May I invite all of you to take a moment to recite al-Fatihah for all of them.

15 It leaves me now to once again express my heartiest congratulations and my heartfelt thanks to the mosque leaders for your tireless contributions and sharing our vision to make our mosques transformational touch-points that Enhance Spirituality, Guide the Community and Change the Lives of our community. Also, my congratulations also to the mosque staff who will be receiving their Certificate in Mosque Management.

Ladies and gentlemen, allow me now to say a few words in Malay.

1 Hari ini kita bakal menyaksikan pelantikan seramai 147 relawan yang bakal memimpin 13 buah masjid Kelompok Tenggara sebagai anggota Lembaga Pentadbir Masjid (LPM). Saya ucapkan tahniah kepada semua yang tampil secara rela hati berkhidmat kepada masyarakat Islam Singapura selama tempoh tiga tahun yang akan datang. Ia suatu tanggungjawab yang besar dan mulia. Dan anda semua telah memberikan komitmen untuk memikul tanggungjawab tersebut sekaligus memakmurkan Rumah Allah.

2 Masjid merupakan institusi yang amat dekat di hati masyarakat Islam. Alhamdulillah, masyarakat menyokong penuh usaha-usaha masjid kita. Tinjauan terhadap khidmat masjid yang kami jalankan tahun lalu mendapati lebih 85% daripada mereka yang ditinjau amat setuju akan keberkesanan usaha masjid dalam Pembelajaran Islam dan Pembangunan Sosial.

3 Selain itu, jangkaan mereka terhadap kelakonan dan peranan pemimpin masjid, termasuk warga kerja masjid juga agak tinggi. Kami juga dapati kini semakin ramai masyarakat Islam berkunjung ke masjid untuk mendekatkan diri kepada Allah, meningkatkan kehidupan kerohanian mereka dan mendalami ilmu keagamaan daripada para asatizah yang bertauliah.

4 Begitu juga kami melihat lebih ramai relawan yang tampil kehadapan untuk menabur bakti sebagai pentadbir masjid. Dalam hal tersebut, kami gembira kerana pada watakah kali ini, sebahagian besar yang mempunyai kelayakan pos-menengah, termasuk siswazah, dan hampir 17% yang dilantik adalah terdiri daripada kaum wanita.

5 Kedua-dua perkembangan ini amat menggalakkan dan ianya saling berkaitan dari segi peningkatan kehidupan beragama di Singapura. Semakin ramai masyarakat yang menjadikan masjid sebagai pusat mendapatkan khidmat dan rujukan. Natijahnya ialah, khidmat masjid tidak lagi boleh selesa di takuk lama. Ia perlu berubah dan dipertingkatkan demi mencapai aspirasi masyarakat yang tinggi.

6 Sebagai pentadbir masjid kita seharusnya menterjemah sokongan padu masyarakat dengan menawarkan kembali kepada mereka khidmat terbaik: baik dari segi budi bahasa ketika berinteraksi dengan mereka mahupun menyediakan program-program bernilai tambah, yang benar-benar memenuhi keperluan kehidupan kerohanian mereka. Kita mesti menjadikan masyarakat sebagai rakan terpenting dalam misi kita memakmurkan masjid. Saya yakin kita mampu melakukannya, Insya Allah!

Wabillahitaufiq Walhidayah, Wassalamualaikm Wr Wbt.