

SPEECH BY DR YAACOB IBRAHIM, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION, MINISTER IN-CHARGE OF CYBER SECURITY & MINISTER IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS AT THE MUIS WORK PLAN SEMINAR AT THE SINGAPORE ISLAMIC HUB ON SATURDAY, 12 MARCH 2016 AT 10.30 AM

Mr Masagos Zulkifli Masagos Mohamad, Minister for Environment and Water Resources

Haji Mohd Alami Musa, President Muis

Haji Abdul Razak Hassan Maricar, Chief Executive

Muis Mufti Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram

Muis Council Members

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum Wr. Wb. and a very good morning.

Vision for the Community

1. I am happy to be here at MUIS' Workplan Seminar. In 2004, we started the MUIS' Three Year Plan as a way to guide the socio-religious development of our community. Today, MUIS will launch its fifth three-year plan. Preparing for the future is vital to ensure that MUIS stays relevant in shaping the community amidst an ever-changing landscape.

2. Over the years, we have made significant progress in strengthening our institutions. MUIS had re-modelled the part-time Islamic education sector to offer thematic, age-appropriate and contemporary content to suit the needs of our young. We strengthened the madrasah sector and, offered specialised and interdisciplinary learning for madrasah students to equip them with a strong understanding of the sacred Scripture and the secular world. We revitalised our wakaf, and upgraded our mosques' infrastructure. MUIS also built new institutions such as MUIS Academy and Harmony Centre to harness the potential of our religious leadership and foster social cohesion.

3. Our efforts have attracted interest from beyond Singapore, with visitors from Sri Lanka, Australia, Malaysia, Brunei, and Indonesia, wanting to learn our practices in mosque management, wakaf revitalisation efforts and how we manage Muslim affairs in a secular state.

4. Our journey towards a gracious community of excellence has been blessed by dedicated staff and volunteers, as well as our institutions which have adapted well to the changing landscape. In this regard, the 5th MUIS 3 Year Plan outlines the plans for our next lap, through nurturing our people and enhancing our institutions, to best meet the socio-religious needs of our community.

Nurturing our People

Developing thought leadership

5. MUIS takes its role in providing religious leadership and guidance seriously. The Office of the Mufti and the Fatwa Committee have been at the forefront of progressive ideas that guide our Muslims who live in a modern, diverse and secular society. Our vision is to develop a model that can withstand the test of time. Over time, our Fatwa committee has been able to provide guidance to increasingly complex issues.

6. To reflect this development, I am pleased to announce that MUIS will be compiling the first volume of Fatwa Compilation and Analysis on Medical Science and Food. This will be the first in a series of annual publications by the Office of the Mufti that will feature other themes such as Family and Social Development, Islamic Finance and Fundamentals of Islamic Theology and Rituals. This Fatwa compilation will be launched at an inaugural “Conference on Fatwa Thinking in Contemporary Societies” later this year, which aims to enhance discourse on fatwa development on contemporary issues.

Nurturing our Young, Harnessing our Potential

7. MUIS will continue to focus on increasing the community’s participation in Islamic Education, particularly our young. MUIS recently completed a study on the demand factors for Islamic Education. One key finding was that 25% of 1,025

respondents participated in some form of home-based Islamic Education and preferred more customised forms of Islamic Education. MUIS will work with the private Islamic Education providers to better cater to these needs, raise the quality of programmes, and to strengthen confidence in the sector.

8. MUIS will also continue to work with our madrasahs in nurturing our future asatizah. The government has also provided strong support. For instance, in recent years, the government had extended Edusave contributions to our madrasah students, waived national examination fees for secular subjects and will be extending greater support to our madrasah teachers who are teaching secular subjects.

9. MUIS is committed to build up our people in the socio-religious sector – from developing young students and asatizah to improving the qualities and capabilities of mosque volunteers and staff. This will continue over the next three years. For example, MUIS will continue efforts to improve the capabilities of its social development officers. By 2018, all social development officers would have attained a Certificate in Social Services and will be better equipped with the necessary skills to serve and empower those in need.

Enhancing our Institutions

10. The Singapore Muslim community is indeed fortunate and blessed to have strong socio-religious institutions such as our mosques, madrasahs and Muslim organisations. All of us have a role to play in further strengthening our institutions. Although our population is small compared to other countries', we have been able to achieve much. This has been made possible by contributions from the various sectors and the community collectively. For example, zakat collection has grown steadily, reaching \$35 million in 2015. Wakaf Ilmu has almost reached its target of \$10 million. At present, Dana Madrasah is contributing \$1 million annually to madrasah, while Mosque Building and MENDAKI Fund (MBMF) collections stand at \$20 million annually.

11. Our community's needs will continue to evolve. To continue our tradition of building sound and strong institutions for the future, we need to review how best to utilise our community resources.

12. We last reviewed MBMF contributions seven years ago in 2009, when we introduced the Religious Education component, and the mosque upgrading component under Mosque Building Fund. The MBMF funds had enabled us to upgrade

17 mosques adding 4,700 prayer spaces for our community¹, as well as new mosques, such as Al-Islah Mosque in Punggol.

13. MBMF also helped to strengthen teacher and curriculum development for religious education through the development of 8 new Islamic studies subjects at the madrasahs, as well as offer subsidised education programmes and greater support for parents with school-going children. We will continue to manage our community resources carefully in order to benefit our community.

14. Over the next 5 years, we will complete the upgrading of the remaining mosques under the Mosque Upgrading Programme (MUP) Phase 2, including the redevelopment of Darul Ghufuran Mosque to meet urgent prayer space needs in the East. We have worked hard with our partner agencies to ensure that the opening of Maarof Mosque later this year and Yusof Ishak Mosque in early 2017 remain on track.

15. We will continue our efforts to ensure the smooth implementation of our Joining Madrasah System (JMS) madrasah secondary-level curriculum and to build better access to quality part-time religious education and expand Mendaki's education programmes and outreach to benefit all in the community. All of these plans that I have outlined will result in increased cost.

16. Hence, to ensure the availability of funds to meet all these needs, the MBMF contribution rates will be revised. This is the first change in the rates after seven years. We have made the contribution framework more progressive with those earning more, giving more. All of us have a part to play in building and strengthening our institutions. In all, the revision will allow us to raise an addition of at least \$6 million every year and this will go a long way to improve the socio-religious life of our community.

17. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the community wholeheartedly for your relentless support to the MBMF since it was set up 41 years ago. Together, we have been contributing to the fund even low income families because we saw that it

¹ MUP Phase 1: Muhajirin, Hajjah Rahimabi, Kampung Siglap, An Nur, Alkaff Upper Serangoon, Al-Ansar, MUP Phase 2: Jamiyah Ar-Rabitah, Mujahidin, Al-Istiqamah, Al-Amin, Darul Aman, Hj Mohd Salleh (Geylang), En-Naeem, Hj Yusoff, Sultan, Sallim Mattar (to be completed in March), Al-Falah (to be completed in April)

was an opportunity to obtain *barakah* (good tidings/blessings) for ourselves and for others in our community. Today, the results of this sincere support are evident all around us – our beautiful mosques, our madrasahs and our students and families benefitting from Mendaki's programmes. But more importantly, MBMF is a clear testimony of our strong support and strong spirit of togetherness as a community. Alhamdulillah this is something we should be proud of. MUIS will be sharing more details later.

Conclusion

18. Ladies and gentlemen, our community has progressed because we are forward looking and we have from time to time remodelled our institutions to ensure that our community is future-ready. At the same time, we also need to continue inculcating the spirit of caring, sharing and giving.

19. A rapidly changing world puts constant pressure on Singaporean Muslims to adapt quickly to remain relevant. We need to continue in planning and adapting to future needs while maintaining our cohesion. We need to continue nurturing progressive ideas and resilient institutions. Most importantly we must build on our greatest asset, our people. With everyone together, we can benefit and contribute actively to Singapore's future. Allow me now to conclude my speech in Malay.

20. Saudara-saudari sekalian, masyarakat Melayu/Islam Singapura telah mencapai banyak kemajuan dalam kehidupan sosio-agama kita kerana kita gigih berusaha untuk mempertingkatkan dan memperkasakan institusi-institusi kita. Dunia kian pesat berubah. Oleh itu kita perlu sentiasa memantau masa depan dan mengambil langkah inovatif bagi menghadapi cabaran dunia baru.

21. Semangat berdaya tahan untuk berdepan dengan cabaran juga harus seiring dengan semangat ingin terus memberi demi perpaduan masyarakat. Semangat ini semakin menyerlah di segenap lapisan masyarakat melalui pelbagai sumbangan. Selain dari itu, kita juga mendapat sokongan padu pemerintah. Misalnya menerusi peruntukan dana Edusave bagi pelajar madrasah dan pengecualian yuran bagi peperiksaan subjek akademik di peringkat nasional. Namun, banyak lagi yang perlu

dibuat seperti membangunkan dan mempertingkatkan masjid serta memperkuat institusi Mendaki dan madrasah kita.

22. Maka itu, setelah dipertimbangkan dengan sebaik-baiknya, kami membuat keputusan untuk mengubah kadar sumbangan Dana Pembinaan Masjid dan Mendaki (MBMF) demi menampung keperluan-keperluan tersebut. Kenaikan kadar ini akan menambah sekurang-kurangnya \$6 juta kepada pungutan tahunan MBMF yang kini mencecah \$20 juta setahun.

23. Saya ingin mengambil kesempatan ini untuk mengucapkan jutaan terimakasih kepada masyarakat kita atas sokongan padu kepada MBMF sejak ia dibentuk 41 tahun lalu. Bermula dengan hanya 50 sen, kita semua, termasuk golongan bergaji rendah, telah sama-sama menyumbang demi kemakmuran masyarakat. Hari ini, hasilnya cukup nyata dan menjadi kebanggaan kita semua. Masjid-masjid kita tersergam indah, madrasah kita terus mencatat prestasi baik dan ramai anak-anak serta keluarga kita meraih faedah daripada pelbagai program yang disediakan Mendaki. Tetapi apa yang paling penting ialah hari ini, MBMF menjadi sebuah wadah yang telah berjaya menyatukan hati-hati kita demi kesejahteraan masyarakat kita. Video ringkas berikut meraikan Semangat Ikhlas Memberi kita bersama.

24. Hadirin-hadirat sekalian, ayuh kita teruskan perjuangan kita dan berganding bahu untuk memperteguhkan institusi-institusi yang menjadi kebanggaan kita.

25. InsyaAllah dengan peningkatan keupayaan di samping semangat gotong-royong kita, masyarakat Melayu/Islam Singapura akan terus menjadi inspirasi bagi masyarakat lain. Semoga hasrat murni kita bersama untuk menjadi sebuah Masyarakat Cemerlang sentiasa dibimbing dan diberkati Allah s.w.t.

Saya akhiri dengan pantun berikut:

Batu kerikil merata-rata
Buat jambatan jalin perpaduan
Biar kecil dipandang mata
Bakti sumbangan sepanjang zaman

Jalan di hadapan masih jauh
Kita mulakan penuh keyakinan

Agama, perpaduan pegangan utuh

Masyarakat kita pemacu teladan

Sekian, wabillahi Taufiq walhidayah wassalamualaikum wr wb.

Terima kasih.
