

**SPEECH BY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF MUIS
HJ ABDUL RAZAK MARICAR
AT THE POSTGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP (PGS)
AWARDS & FINANCIAL GRANT CEREMONY
AND THE SYED ISA SEMAIT AWARD
ON MON, 21 SEPTEMBER 15
AT SUNTEC CONVENTION CENTRE**

Minister for Communications and Information & Minister-in-charge
of Muslim Affairs, Dr Yaacob Ibrahim

Sahibus Samahah Mufti of Singapore, Dr Mohamed Fatris
Bakaram

Muis Council members

Muis Postgraduate Scholarship Committee Members

Award recipients

Ladies and Gentlemen

Assalamualaikum wr wb

1. The world has seen massive transformation and the process of globalisation continue to shape new challenges for societies and authorities. The challenges of intellectual, scientific and technological advancements will require a pool of scholars

and specialists to address complex and multifaceted issues as well as to guide our community in our religious life.

2. Out of that realisation, Muis established the Muis Post-graduate Scholarship (PGS) scheme to ensure that our community will have the necessary domain specialists and experts to address emerging and frontier issues. In 2005, Muis awarded the first two scholarships and two grants for Doctorate and Master Programmes under the PGS.

3. Ten years on, we are happy to report that we have expended more than a million dollars and awarded 24 recipients of scholarships and grants: 11 PhDs and 14 Masters Programmes in studies on Islam, Society and Muslim communities. The areas of research include Islamic finance, Islamic Bioethics, Sociology, Comparative Law, History, Political Science and Fatwa. Of these, seven have successfully completed their PhDs and 13 their Masters, and five are still undergoing their studies.

Service to the Community and Beyond

4. I am also happy to inform that these recipients are actively contributing to the community and nation in various ways.

5. Dr Rufaihah Abdul Jalil was one of the first recipients of the PGS grant in 2005. She specialised in Cardiovascular Biology, Stem cells, Biomaterials and Tissue Engineering. She completed her doctorate at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine of the National University of Singapore in 2007, and did her post-doctorate at Stanford University in California. Her works have been published in many international journals, and she has garnered many awards, including two Young Investigator Awards.

6. Dr Rufaihah is currently an Assistant Professor at the Department of Surgery, National University of Singapore. She actively contributes to the research and discourses on life sciences, medicine, and Islamic bioethics at the Fatwa council, the Office of Mufti, and even beyond that at the Muzakarah Ulama of MABIMS (a regional collaboration of the Muslim authorities of Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore). Her passion to develop young Muslim scientists drives her to guide and mentor students in madrasahs who are keen to study and research in science. She is an inspiration to budding scientists.

7. Another recipient was Hanna Taufiq Siraj. Armed with a strong foundation on Islam and Islamic traditions from her Madrasah education, she successfully completed her studies at the International Islamic University of Malaysia. She was awarded the PGS to do her Masters at the National University of Singapore

focusing on international relations and law. Since her graduation in 2009, she has been serving Muis in developing Islamic intellectual discourse programmes, policy research, and asatizah development. She was also an associate member of the Fatwa Committee.

8. Besides contributing to various Islamic discourses, she has also served in national committees such as the Inter-Ministerial Committee on CEDAW and Media Development Authority's Films Consultative Panel.

9. Our most recent Muis Postgraduate award recipient who completed his studies is Dr Norshahril Saat. He received his PGS award in 2011 to pursue his Doctorate at the Australian National University. His outstanding performance earned him several awards while in the university. Dr Norshahril specialises in research on Islam, the State and the Role of Ulama' in Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. He regularly contributes research essays to international academic journals, in addition to various commentaries and analysis. Beyond publications, he actively builds Islamic discourse through seminars, roundtable discussions, and workshops.

Preserving the Scholarly Tradition

Ladies and gentlemen

10. I have mentioned some outstanding products of the PGS. I move now to our efforts to develop our local pool of experts and specialists.

11. Ust Muhammad Azfar Anwar is an alumnus of Madrasah Aljunied. While in Madrasah Aljunied, he participated in a series of workshops, seminars and courses beyond the formal curriculum. He graduated with distinction from the renowned Darul Ulum in Cairo University, emerging as one of the top students in his programme in 2014. He also served as a Project Officer in Muis' Office of Mufti.

12. I am pleased to announce that Ust Muhammad Azfar will be awarded the Muis Postgraduate Scholarship this year to pursue his postgraduate study in Islamic Thought and History at the prestigious University of Oxford. I trust he will return to contribute to Muis as well as to the community and nation, true to the spirit and objectives of the PGS.

13. In addition to the scholarship, we will also be awarding a grant to an aspiring student who is keen to study Islamic political thought and how Muslims negotiate and navigate in the modern

nation-state political contexts. This PGS Grant is awarded to Ms Muneerah Abdul Razak for her studies at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

Ladies and gentlemen

14. I have the honour today to announce our first recipient of the Syed Isa Semait Scholar (SISS) Award. The Syed Isa Semait Scholarship Award was established to honour the former Mufti of Singapore, Sheikh Syed Isa Semait for his scholarly work, profound religious leadership to the community and contributions towards engendering greater inter-faith understanding. This award serves to preserve the legacy of Sheikh Syed Isa's outstanding contributions and to inspire younger generations towards rendering their service for the Muslim community and the nation.

15. The first recipient of this award is someone I have already mentioned, Dr Noorshahril Saat earlier. In receiving this award, Dr Noorshahril, will receive a \$10,000 grant to conduct a study to understand the educational orientations and considerations in influencing students' choice of educational institution, for students from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia who are currently studying in Islamic universities in the Middle East.

Aspirations and Commitments

16. Nurturing domain specialists and expertise in the community requires sustained effort. However, it is a necessity. As the saying goes, “It takes the whole village to raise a child”. Hence, it is in this spirit and with the support of the community that we are able to carry this amanah or trust. We are confident that with the community’s continued support, doa and constructive wisdom, we will be able to do it well, Insya Allah.

17. We seek Allah’s guidance in realizing the vision of developing a progressive, contributive and adaptive community - one that is religiously profound and continues to thrive in a modern and cosmopolitan Singapore and the globalized world. My heartiest congratulations to all recipients.

18. Wabillahi Taufiq Wal hidayah. Wassalamualaikum wr wb