

**SPEECH BY DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF MUIS, DR ALBAKRI AHMAD AT THE
MADRASAH TEACHERS SYMPOSIUM, ON 29 DECEMBER 2016
AT SUNTEC CONVENTION CENTRE**

<Tahmid & Solawat>

Ustaz Mohd Murat Mohd Aris, Senior Director of Education, Muis

Principals and HODs from the six Madrasahs

Asatizah, teachers and colleagues,

Assalamualaikum wr. wb.

1. It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today at the inaugural Madrasah Teachers Symposium.
2. Madrasah teachers play an important role in nurturing the minds and hearts of our future asatizah. You are the role models to your students. One day, they will take over the torch of leadership from you, in providing religious guidance to our community. Your position as asatizah and teachers in the full-time Madrasahs is special because your efforts today will bear its fruits in the future and lead to positive ripples, inshaa Allah.

NURTURING FUTURE-READY ASATIZAH

3. The environment in which our students will function, in 10 to 20 years' time, will be different from today. We need to prepare our students to be future-ready. But, what does it mean to be future-ready? Please allow me to share my thoughts on this topic.

4. First and foremost, they have to be strongly imbued with taqwa – which provides the spiritual-moral compass that guides their decisions. At the same time, they will need to be equipped with competencies to navigate future complexities with hikmah. While we may not know exactly how the future will pan out, we do know the attributes, knowledge domains and skillsets which can strengthen their resilience when dealing with emerging challenges. These include:
 - a. Remaining rooted to Islamic principles while adapting to changing context
 - b. Having deep appreciation of Islamic civilization and history as well as good understanding of contemporary issues
 - c. Leadership skills , critical & inventive thinking and ICT competencies
 - d. Spirit of continuous learning and keen interest in current affairs
 - e. Tawadu' or humility in service
5. With the right attitude, knowledge and skills, we make doa that they will be able to guide the Muslim community confidently into the future.

HONOURING EDUCATORS FOR THEIR SERVICE AND SACRIFICES

6. The role of a teacher is very complex. The skills required of a great teacher is multi-faceted. Designing curriculum, crafting lessons plans, matching learning resources to your students' needs, mentoring, disciplining, motivating and the list goes on.
7. For all your sacrifices, I would like to take the opportunity to thank you. Thank you for being part of the Madrasah fraternity. May Allah's rahmah and blessings be upon all of you. Amin.

8. Today's symposium is organised especially for you and the appreciation lunch later at noon, is our way of saying thank you for all that you've done.

CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF TEACHERS TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN OUR MADRASAHs

9. Muis recognises that the level of education a child receives is dependent on the proficiency of their teachers. It is thus critical for us to continue investing and supporting the continuous professional development of our asatizah and teachers.
10. Back in 2003, less than 10% of our educators had a recognised teaching certification. Today, more than 90% possess a recognised teaching diploma. 170 teachers have been sponsored to receive teaching diplomas from Edith Cowan University and the National Institute of Education. And as we scan for quality teaching diplomas and review the existing needs of our Madrasahs, Muis is now sponsoring individual teachers for the Specialist Diploma in Applied Learning and Teaching programme offered by Republic Polytechnic and subsidised by the Ministry of Education.
11. Continuous professional development opportunities for teachers is important. Hence more recently between 2014 to 2016, Muis has been coordinating pedagogical workshops based on the Skillful Teacher framework for all 6 Madrasahs. Our deepest appreciation to Mr Kamaludin Bahadin for sacrificing his precious time to carry out the introductory workshops and the patchwork assessment workshops for the 6 Madrasahs.

12. Muis has also been coordinating subject-based workshops as a form of targeted approach to address teachers' immediate pedagogical content needs and interests. Apart from pedagogical and subject-based workshops, we also encourage our *asatizah* and teachers to attend relevant conferences for knowledge sharing and knowledge building opportunities. This year, Muis sponsored teachers to attend the Language Conference organised by the Regional Language Centre and; the International Conference on Teaching and Learning with Technology (ICTLT) in March; the Mathematics Conference organised by NIE in June; and the EdTech Summit organised at the American School in September.
13. Muis also supports leadership development and sponsors Madrasah HODs to attend the Management and Leadership in Schools (MLS) programme offered by the National Institute of Education annually. More than 20 HODs are now MLS trained.
14. Madrasah leaders and HODs are also encouraged and sponsored to attend relevant leadership courses and conferences. In April this year, representatives from Madrasah Al-Arabiah, Madrasah Alsagoff, Madrasah Irsyad and Madrasah Al-Maarif attended the World Educational Leadership Summit organised by the International Association for Scholastic Excellence. In late November to early December this year we also sent Ustaz Syed Mustafa Alsagoff and Mdm Faeza and Mdm Subaidah from Madrasah Irsyad for a Lesson Study Immersion programme in Tokyo, Japan.
15. To date, more than \$3 million dollars has been channelled towards teaching certification, leadership development and continuous professional development workshops.

16. Annually, Muis also provides teacher development funding to each Madrasah because we believe in school-based development which will be able to cater to the immediate and specific needs of educators in each Madrasah. On this note, I would like to thank the Madrasah Principals for your trust, ideas and support in making both the school-based and sector-based development opportunities possible.

**INAUGURAL MADRASAH TEACHERS SYMPOSIUM:
BY TEACHERS, FOR TEACHERS**

17. Today's Madrasah Teachers Symposium is special because for the first time, it is **organised by teachers for teachers**. Muis feels that it is important to support knowledge sharing across the 6 Madrasahs because there is a lot of knowledge amongst you that has yet to be harnessed.
18. In July this year, 6 teachers and 2 Muis staff attended the Skillful Teacher workshop at the Research for Better Teaching Centre in Massachusetts, USA. There, they met with some Principals and Vice-Principals from the Ministry of Education who have incorporated the Skillful Teacher framework into their school's teaching and learning frameworks. Alhamdulillah I am proud to learn that our teachers and asatizah represented us well when they were overseas. They shared ideas, asked questions and worked diligently to complete the reading assignments. Today, the 6 of them – Mr Fammy, Mr Rosli, Ustazah Juyda, Mr Aidal, Ustaz Baha and Mdm Bazitah – will be sharing with you some of the knowledge that they have gained while in the US.

19. Mr Fammy and Mr Rosli will be sharing on the importance of aligning the criteria for success to the lesson's mastery objective and making the "criteria for success" explicit and accessible to students. This is one of the many critical components in the Skillful Teacher framework. Students in Ustazah Juyda's geography classes for example have benefited from this approach. Students have reported that they feel more empowered and motivated when the criteria for success is clearly stated for them. With the goal in mind, they are able to improve the way they think about and respond to examination questions.
20. Core to the framework is the aim at expanding teaching tools or repertoire. This can be achieved when one gets access to good practices through reading, observations, trial and error, discussions and deep contemplation and reflection. One of the four workshops later today by Madrasah Alsagoff extends the Skillful Teacher framework by looking into how technology can be used to support teacher reflection and development.
21. It is our hope that all of us will all strive to expand and sharpen our teaching tools on a continuous basis for the benefit of our students. We recognise the fact that teaching is a complex endeavour and that teachers needs to possess a wide range of tools that can be matched to the needs of our students. It is my greatest hope that the Skillful Teacher programme will produce the appreciation that while we are all not perfect, we strive for perfection in giving the best to our students – in ensuringbg that they receive an optimal learning experience in our classrooms, that they develop the skills critical for the future and that they achieve mastery in the knowledge that you would like to impart to them.

22. In fact, the process of reflection is a concept that is closely embedded in the Islamic tradition, as evidenced by the many Quranic verses and Hadiths that encourages us to contemplate. We are also advised by Saidina Umar Ibn Al-Khattab of the importance of muhasabah. Muhasabah or the act of reflection is not just useful, it is also critical for self-improvement and development. I do hope that the leaders amongst you will consider providing your teachers with the time, space and structure to reflect on a regular basis so that they will continue to find meaning in teaching. I also hope that the rest of you would consider how you can contribute to more knowledge sharing so that we can learn from each other and expand the knowledge base in the Madrasahs.
23. I am very pleased to note that 9 teachers from all 6 Madrasahs will be leading the four workshops later today. They have been working very hard to prepare the workshop materials. I hope that the workshops will pave the way for more teacher-led sharings in the future and encourage further discussions into topics that are close to your hearts.
24. The Madrasah sector is special because the social network is vibrant with ukhuwah. And we need to harness this special bond even further. We need to provide for platforms such as this symposium for networking and for the sharing of ideas. We welcome any initiatives or suggestions that will enable us to support more teacher collaborations and networking – both within Madrasahs and across Madrasahs.
-

25. Izinkan saya teruskan ucapan saya secara ringkas dalam Bahasa Melayu. Sesungguhnya tanggungjawab anda semua sebagai guru-guru di madrasah amat berat. Di tangan gurulah terletak masa depan pelajar. Pelajar madrasah harus diberi ilmu yang berbagai, diserapkan takwa dan bersedia menghadapi cabaran masakini dan masa depan dengan penuh hikmah dan tawadu'.
26. Sudah tentu ini bermula dengan terhasilnya tenaga pendidik yang mampu memupuk, membimbing dan menghasilkan pelajar-pelajar cemerlang yang bakal menjadi pelapis pimpinan agama masyarakat. Lantas, Muis telah memperuntukkan lebih \$3 juta kepada sektor Madrasah bagi usaha-usaha pembangunan guru. Ini dimanfaatkan dalam pelbagai bentuk – dari pensijilan ke pembangunan kepimpinan.
27. Di samping itu, setiap tahun, Muis juga memperuntukkan dana untuk setiap madrasah untuk mempertingkatkan kemahiran mengajar di kalangan tenaga pendidik madrasah. Sebagai contoh, sembilan guru dari keenam-enam madrasah akan membuat pembentangan di empat bengkel perkongsian kemahiran, termasuk Kerangka Guru Mahir, dan penggunaan teknologi untuk muhasabah. Kami mengalu-alukan usaha sebegini, yang menangani isu-isu pendidik dari pengurusan kelas ke reka bentuk kurikulum serta kemahiran-kemahiran khusus mengajar. Sememangnya kami menyediakan platform-platform seperti symposium ini bagi tujuan berkongsi idea dan meluaskan lagi rangkaian. Kami juga mengalu-alukan pelbagai idea serta inisiatif bagi menyokong kolaborasi dalam dan luar sektor Madrasah.

28. I hope that you will continue to open your minds and hearts to new ideas and allow yourself to inspire others and be inspired. As a small community, we need to work together in building our capacity for our students so that they will contribute towards ***developing a gracious community of excellence that inspires and radiates blessings to all.***
29. I wish you all a meaningful and productive learning experience today. And may the new school year in 2017 go smoothly and successfully for everyone.