

**SPEECH BY MR MASAGOS ZULKIFLI, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY  
DEVELOPMENT, SECOND MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND MINISTER-IN-  
CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS FOR MINISTER'S HARI RAYA GET-TOGETHER  
ON FRIDAY, 19 APRIL 2024**

***“Preserving tradition of a contributing community”  
(Budaya Berbakti, Tradisi Dilestari)***

DPM Lawrence Wong,  
SM Teo Chee Hean,  
Mufti of Singapore,  
Community leaders,  
Distinguished colleagues,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. *Assalamualaikum Warahmatullahi Wabarakatuh* and Selamat Hari Raya to everyone. *Maaf Zahir dan Batin.*
2. Thank you for joining me at tonight’s Hari Raya Get-together. I am glad to see old and new friends here, especially those from other communities. It is heartening to see how we come together for each other’s festivities.
3. I am also happy to have DPM Wong with us, who will be appointed as our fourth Prime Minister. Please join me to congratulate him! DPM will be taking over the mantle from Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who has been a steadfast supporter of inter-community relations in Singapore and the partnership between our Malay/Muslim community and the Government. On behalf of the community, let me express our deep gratitude to PM Lee for his decades of service to the nation. Thank you PM.
4. I am confident that this legacy of trust will endure under DPM Wong’s guidance, and together we will continue to work towards an ever-brighter future for Singapore.

5. Ladies and gentlemen, five years ago, I called our Singapore Muslim community a Community of Success, that demonstrates three Cs - Character, Competence and Citizenry. In the last few Hari Raya gatherings, I spoke about developing our community's Character and Competence to propel us forward. But Citizenry in my opinion remains at the core of our Singaporean Muslim identity – to contribute to a united society, striving together for the common good. Therefore, citizenry is what I would to speak about today.

### **Exemplifying active citizenry**

6. Citizenry is a key element of Muslim minority communities. Communities like ours grapple with contemporary issues while living in a secular society. The issues that we face here may be different these communities from other countries, but there is much we can learn from each other, even those before our time. I was therefore glad to see many international scholars gathering in Singapore for the Fatwa Conference last February to discuss the role of the fatwa in such a modern and contemporary society.

7. How do we lead lives as good citizens and Muslims? Dr Shawki Allam, the Grand Mufti of Egypt, recognised the importance of finding responses to this question during the recent Fatwa Conference. Dr Allam said and I quote: *“It is imperative for those involved in Muslim affairs in non-Islamic countries to develop a document outlining the transactions of Muslims in these regions. This document should emphasize the concept of citizenship, an inherent term in our Islamic culture, exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)...”* Dr Allam further explained that *“Therefore, Muslims, whether born, residing, migrated, or integrated into these countries, should strive to establish relationships based on love, mercy, constructive coexistence, openness, and acceptance of cultural, civilizational, philosophical, and religious diversity, while preserving their religious identity.”*

8. Indeed, this points to the need to develop a body of Islamic knowledge and a positive narrative that supports minority Muslims living harmoniously with others as fellow citizens and as good Muslims. This need was unanimously supported by many eminent religious scholars who attended the recent Fatwa Conference and the

inaugural International Conference on Communities of Success (ICCOS) in 2022. For such a body of knowledge and articulation of successful Muslim communities will help inspire the 400 million Muslims around the world living as minorities just like us. We look forward to contribute to this body of knowledge and narrative of successful Muslim communities at the second edition of ICCOS later this year.

9. The concept of citizenry is found in the practices of past and present Muslim minority communities.

a. For instance, the Tang Dynasty in China saw significant contributions from minority Muslim communities, particularly the Hui people. During that time, and in the subsequent Ming Dynasty, Hui Muslims were known for their **expertise in trade and commerce**. They served in the **military** and often played important roles in defending the empire's borders. They also contributed to **cultural exchange** between China and the Islamic world, bringing new ideas, technologies, and cultural practices to the Chinese society and enriching the cultural landscape there.

b. The Muslim minority community in Brazil too play a significant role in their society, where they have a strong heritage and thriving business presence, making Brazil one of the largest halal beef exporter in the world.

10. Like the Hui people and the Brazilian Muslim community, our **Singapore Muslims have played a significant role in Singapore society, in addressing our national and community challenges with pragmatic approaches rooted in Islamic principles**.

### **Memupuk Masyarakat yang Pemurah**

11. Allow me to continue in Malay.

12. Para hadirin yang saya hormati, unsur utama kewarganegaraan ialah masyarakat yang menyumbang kepada pembangunan masyarakat serta negara. Sebuah kaum minoriti boleh menyumbang dengan berkesan apabila ia sendiri adalah

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masyarakat perkasa. Masyarakat perkasa adalah masyarakat yang boleh berdikari. Ini sama dengan negara kecil seperti Singapura, yang perlu berada dalam kedudukan yang mantap dan berdikari untuk kekal berdaulat.

13. Kini, masyarakat kita lebih perkasa dan berada pada landasan yang kukuh. Ini kerana dua faktor yang unik.

14. **Pertama, keberanian.** Kita berani menghadapi cabaran-cabaran besar yang membelenggu masyarakat, dan berikhtiar mencari huraian untuk mencapai kemajuan.

15. **Itulah ciri-ciri yang dipamerkan masyarakat kita empat puluh tahun yang lalu. Pada waktu itu, masyarakat Melayu berhadapan dengan masalah keciciran pendidikan yang sangat meruncing. Para pemimpin masyarakat berani menerima hakikat ini.** Mereka akur bahawa sistem meritokrasi di Singapura adalah teras negara. Dan hakikatnya, kita tidak boleh mengharapkan kuota atau tindakan afirmatif sebagai penyelesaian mudah dan cepat. Kita perlu bekerja keras untuk mencatat kemajuan untuk mendapatkan kelayakan mahupun pengiktirafan yang sewajarnya. Justeru, Mendaki ditubuhkan untuk tujuan ini. Sepanjang beberapa dekad, para pemimpin masyarakat kita berganding bahu dan beriltizam untuk meningkatkan pencapaian pendidikan masyarakat kita.

- a. Hasilnya, masalah keciciran telah diatasi dengan tuntas. Malah, lebih ramai pelajar Melayu kini layak ke institusi-institusi pengajian tinggi. Bilangan siswazah pun terus meningkat dengan begitu ketara, sebanyak seganda antara 2010 dengan 2020.
- b. Dengan pencapaian pendidikan yang lebih baik, lebih ramai orang Melayu memegang jawatan PMET dan mereka bekerja dalam sektor-sektor yang pesat berkembang seperti Maklumat dan Perhubungan.
- c. Peningkatan-peningkatan ini sekali gus menaikkan pendapatan median keluarga per kapita tahun demi tahun.

16. Keberanian juga telah membolehkan kita menghadapi gejala-gejala sosial lain hingga mengurangkan kadar jenayah yang tinggi. Kini, ia juga akan membantu kita menangani isu-isu baru yang bertambah rumit. Ini termasuk membantu golongan pekerja kita untuk memperoleh kemahiran serta kelayakan supaya kekal relevan, menangani masalah kesejahteraan mental, ataupun masalah kesihatan seperti tekanan darah tinggi dan kencing manis. Keberanian telah menjadi kunci kemajuan masyarakat kita. Kita perlu terus berani dan bukan berasa malu dengan masalah-masalah yang membelenggu masyarakat kita. Kerana kita akur keberanian telah menghasilkan kemajuan bagi diri kita sendiri, dan juga masyarakat kita.

17. **Ciri yang kedua ialah kebersamaan.** Semangat gotong royong sudah menjadi sebahagian daripada budaya orang Melayu yang sehati dengan jiwa dan naluri masyarakat kita. Ia mendorong sikap saling membantu yang telah membolehkan kita untuk mencatat kemajuan yang deras sejak Singapura merdeka.

18. Dengan bersatu padu menghadapi masalah-masalah yang timbul, dan menghadapinya dengan berani, masyarakat kita akan terus perkasa. **Atas semangat inilah kami membentuk M<sup>3</sup> lima tahun yang lalu untuk memperkasa masyarakat Melayu/Islam, agar kita dapat berganding bahu dalam menghuraikan masalah-masalah berbeza serta merangsang kejayaan.**

- a. Sehingga kini, M<sup>3</sup> telah menjayakan pelbagai usaha seperti program sokongan rumahtangga melalui Bersamamu, program penglibatan belia melalui inisiatif pementoran, program pendampingan keluarga di flat-flat sewa menerusi Projek Dian@M<sup>3</sup>, program sokongan kepada bekas pesalah menerusi FITRAH, serta program meningkatkan tahap kesihatan melalui Saham Kesihatan.
- b. Saya gembira ramai karyawan telah turun padang melalui rangkaian M<sup>3</sup>, dalam memperkuatkan lagi program-program pementoran belia kita.
- c. Saya mengucapkan terima kasih kepada semua sukarelawan dan kakitangan daripada Muis, MENDAKI dan MESRA serta badan-badan

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Melayu/Islam (MMO), serta rakan-rakan pertubuhan masyarakat yang lain atas segala usaha dan kerjasama yang penuh bermakna ini.

- d. **Kita bakal menyambut ulang tahun M<sup>3</sup> yang kelima pada akhir tahun ini.** Ini adalah suatu peluang yang baik untuk menilai semula dan meraikan kemajuan masyarakat kita, sambil merakamkan penghargaan kepada semua yang telah tampil ke hadapan untuk berkongsi masa, bakat dan rezeki demi kemaslahatan masyarakat kita.

### Memikir Jangka Panjang

19. Para hadirin yang saya hormati, dalam menangani keperluan masyarakat kita dan Singapura yang berubah-ubah pada masa mendatang, kita mesti memanfaatkan kekuatan yang baru pula jika mahu terus menjadi masyarakat perkasa.

- a. Pada awal zaman pembangunan Singapura, terdapat beberapa hartawan di kalangan nenek moyang kita. Dermawan seperti Hajjah Fatimah dan Syed Omar Ali Aljunied telah mewakafkan kekayaan mereka untuk membangunkan masjid-masjid di Singapura, Alhamdulillah.
- b. Apabila jumlah penduduk kita bertambah, kita perlu membina lebih banyak masjid untuk memenuhi keperluan agama masyarakat kita yang turut meningkat. Generasi yang lalu menggarap sumbangan bulanan secara kecil-kecilan daripada pekerja Muslim menerusi Dana Pembinaan Masjid, yang sekarang dikenali sebagai MBMF, hingga membiayai kos pembinaan 26 buah masjid di kawasan kejiranan kita.

20. Memandang ke hadapan, pajakan tanah bagi masjid perlu diperbaharui, dan kosnya tentu akan lebih mahal daripada sebelumnya. Kita juga perlu membiayai kos pendidikan agama dan keperluan sosial masyarakat kita yang semakin meningkat.

21. Seperti nenek moyang kita, **kita harus membuat perancangan lebih awal sebagai persiapan demi memenuhi keperluan masa hadapan. Kita juga perlu pendekatan yang baru.**

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- a. **Dalam hal ini, kita mempunyai asas yang kukuh.** Masyarakat kita mempunyai sekurang-kurangnya \$2 bilion dalam bentuk aset cair. Ini dianggap berdasarkan pungutan zakat yang berjumlah sekitar \$60 juta setiap tahun.
- b. Hakikatnya, jumlah nilai aset masyarakat semakin tinggi. Oleh itu, saya telah mengusulkan penubuhan Wakaf Masyarakat Singapura (WMS) untuk memanfaatkan kekayaan yang terkumpul dalam masyarakat kita. Dengan cara ini, ia membolehkan setiap orang menjadi ahli wakif dengan memberikan sumbangan kepada wakaf tersebut. Pada asasnya, WMS hanya akan menggunakan pulangan dan tidak mencairkan dana pokok. Ia akan menyokong pelbagai keperluan masyarakat secara meluas dan fleksibel, termasuk pembangunan asatizah kita.

22. Banyak persiapan yang telah dilakukan setakat ini untuk melaksanakan WMS. Pada 2020, Panel Penasihat WMS yang diketuai oleh Encik Abu Bakar Mohd Nor telah bertemu pihak-pihak berkepentingan secara meluas untuk bertukar-tukar pandangan mengenai pelaksanaan WMS. Ini membina tiang-tiang WMS. Terima kasih saya ucapkan kepada Encik Abu Bakar dan para anggota Panel.

23. Pada awal tahun ini pula, Pemerintah telah meminda Akta Pentadbiran Hukum Islam (AMLA) untuk mewujudkan asas undang-undang bagi WMS. **Kami akan membentuk sebuah Jawatankuasa Sementara untuk menyelia pelaksanaan WMS. Kami juga akan membentuk sebuah Kumpulan Kerja Perancangan Legasi Islam untuk mempertingkatkan pemahaman dan sokongan daripada masyarakat kita kepada WMS.**

- a. **Encik Bahren Shaari telah bersetuju untuk menjadi Pengerusi bagi Jawatankuasa Sementara** yang akan selanjutnya dijadikan Lembaga WMS, manakala **Encik Zhulkarnain Rahim pula akan mengetuai Kumpulan Kerja Perancangan Legasi Islam.** Terima kasih Encik Bahren dan Zhulkarnain.

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- b. Mereka akan berusaha menggalak masyarakat kita untuk mengamalkan perancangan harta pusaka, dan mewakafkan sebahagian harta kepada WMS, bagi memenuhi keperluan jangka panjang keagamaan kita. Ini juga termasuk penulisan wasiat yang turut merupakan antara amalan penting yang perlu kita tunaikan sebagai orang Islam. Muis telah menetapkan bulan **Ogos ini sebagai Bulan Wakaf**, untuk menyokong masyarakat memahami lebih lanjut terhadap usaha ini.

24. Seperti mana generasi yang lalu telah memberi sumbangan bagi generasi yang seterusnya, kini peluang kita pula. Marilah kita menyumbang kepada WMS apabila ia dilancarkan pada bulan Ogos nanti sebagai sumbangan kita di dunia dan saham di akhirat kelak, InsyaAllah.

25. Para hadirin sekalian, **tidak semua masyarakat minoriti Islam berkongsi pengalaman yang sama dengan kita atau mampu memperkasakan diri mereka dengan ciri-ciri yang saya sebutkan tadi iaitu keberanian dan kebersamaan atas sebab-sebab tertentu. Disebabkan ini maka mereka tidak mempunyai nasib sebaik kita.**

- a. Ada masyarakat Islam minoriti yang hidup di negara maju tetapi masih menghadapi isu keperluan asas agama, seperti mewujudkan kawasan perkuburan Islam. Negara mereka mungkin sahaja mempunyai undang-undang untuk menyempurnakan keperluan rakyat, termasuk orang Islam; tetapi hakikatnya, undang-undang tersebut tidak semestinya memanfaatkan mereka.
- b. Terdapat juga masyarakat yang berhadapan dengan situasi baru di mana pemerintah yang dipilih menang kerana memperjuangkan kepentingan kaum majoriti dalam pentadbiran negara. Di tempat-tempat sedemikian, status kaum minoriti telah berubah, dan mereka kini dipinggirkan atau berhadapan dengan keganasan.

26. Contoh-contoh ini menjadi peringatan penting kepada kita tentang dua perkara:



- a. Pertama, **kita, di Singapura, tidak boleh bersikap sambil lewa terhadap keyakinan yang ada di antara kaum, serta keharmonian sosial kita,** kerana ia bukan satu perkara yang berlaku secara semula jadi mahupun sesuatu yang pasti berkekalan buat selamanya. Ia perlu dipupuk dari semasa ke semasa oleh setiap individu dalam masyarakat.
- b. Kedua – setiap kaum, sama ada minoriti atau majoriti, **perlu saling hormat-menghormati antara satu sama lain, serta bekerjasama dan memainkan peranan masing-masing demi kepentingan masyarakat dan negara.**

### **Membina sebuah Masyarakat yang Bersatu Padu**

27. Ini membawa saya kembali kepada konsep kewarganegaraan. Kerana masyarakat perkasa juga perlu terus membina keyakinan dengan masyarakat lain dan Pemerintah.

28. Mufti telah mengungkap sebuah hadis dalam khutbah Hari Raya tahun ini, "*Perumpamaan seorang mukmin itu seperti pohon kurma, apa pun yang kamu ambil darinya pasti bermanfaat bagimu.*" Mufti menjelaskan bahawa akhlak seorang Muslim yang yakin, berdaya tahan, dan perkasa, adalah seperti pohon kurma yang memberi perlindungan dan sumbangan bermakna kepada dunia. Jika seorang Islam pohon kurma, masyarakat kita pula ibarat kebun kurma! Kebun kerana kekuatan kolektif kita. Dan ia akan dimanfaatkan sebaiknya apabila kita bekerjasama dalam pelbagai aspek dengan masyarakat lain dan Pemerintah hingga terbina keyakinan terhadap masyarakat kita.

29. Tahun ini, Barometer Keyakinan Edelman melaporkan bahawa Singapura mencatat antara mata tertinggi bagi keyakinan terhadap Pemerintah dan institusi-institusi lain, dan ini telah meningkat sejak 2020. Ini membuktikan bahawa usaha-usaha yang dijalankan oleh Pemerintah, para pemimpin masyarakat, serta rakyat awam, untuk membina keyakinan terhadap satu sama lain, telah berjaya membuahkan hasil, sedang kita membina masa hadapan bersama. Kerana membina keyakinan antara masyarakat berbilang bangsa dan agama ialah tunjang kewarganegaraan.

30. Tinjauan ini juga menunjukkan bahawa setiap kaum, termasuk masyarakat Melayu/Islam kita, memainkan peranan masing-masing sebagai rakyat yang aktif, dan dalam membina sebuah masyarakat Singapura yang bersatu padu. Ini tidak mungkin tercapai tanpa keberanian dan kebersamaan masyarakat kita dan jadikan masyarakat perkasa. Inilah tunjung kewarganegaraan.

### **Kepimpinan Agama**

31. Saya juga bersyukur kerana dalam soal kewarganegaraan, kepimpinan agama kita telah membimbing masyarakat dengan baik. Mereka membantu kita mengemudi isu-isu yang menjadi keprihatinan negara dan lensa agama dan memastikan semangat kewarganegaraan kita terus mekar.

- a. Misalnya, umat Islam bersatu hati dalam menentang penganasan selepas peristiwa 9/11 (sebelas September) dan Kumpulan Pemulihan Keagamaan (RRG) pula menyokong usaha-usaha Pemerintah memerangi ekstremisme hingga ke hari ini.
- b. Mufti kita juga telah memaparkan semangat kewarganegaraan yang begitu menyerlah apabila beliau dan Ketua Rabai bertukar-tukar surat untuk memberi keyakinan bahawa mereka terus menyokong satu sama lain semakin konflik di Gaza bertambah buruk. Dalam masa yang mencabar ini, Mufti mengingatkan kita supaya mengubat rasa benci dengan sifat rahmah dan menangkis kezaliman dengan kebaikan. Namun, beliau tidak meninggalkan prinsip dan meluahkan tegurannya apabila Kedutaan Israel memuatnaikkan hantaran Facebook yang tidak wajar. Tindakan-tindakan ini jelas menunjukkan sifat kewarganegaraan yang tersemat dalam prinsip agama kita, yang dapat memandu semangat yang sama dalam masyarakat kita.

32. Oleh itu, kita perlu membangunkan pendekatan-pendekatan yang pragmatik sedang kita berhadapan dengan isu-isu baru dan unik. Para cendekiawan Islam kita perlu membangunkan prinsip-prinsip yang boleh diterapkan dalam kehidupan harian kita. Mereka harus membantu orang-orang Islam menghadapi isu-isu harian yang

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timbul secara objektif dan bukan mengikut perasaan semata-mata, dengan kesederhanaan dan bukan secara melampau, mengikut konteks dan bukan secara mutlak, atau *absolute*. Dengan kerencaman media sosial, kita mesti memupuk naluri mendalam di jiwa masyarakat Islam di Singapura untuk mengemudi identiti mereka sebagai rakyat Singapura, sambil mentaati tuntutan agama.

### Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, let me conclude.

33. Through the efforts of M<sup>3</sup> agencies, and volunteers who gave of their time, talent and treasure, we will solve new problems with confidence. To honour their tireless efforts, M<sup>3</sup> will be commemorating its 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. As we celebrate citizenry today, we also commit to plan ahead for the next generation. We will launch the Wakaf Masyarakat Singapura later this year.

34. Our community leaders galvanized the strength of the Muslim community and MMOs, collectively solving what seemed to be intractable problems. The chief of this was education and today, we are a Community with Competence.

35. Our religious leaders built us up to be Muslims of Character, inculcating values that motivate us to apply our collective strengths with compassion and care for all. We are governed in Singapore in a manner, that enables everyone to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress regardless of race, language or religion.

36. With strength, we demonstrate our citizenry with confidence. With Citizenry we earn trust. With Competence we earn respect. With Character we earn love.

37. Let us go forward as a Community of Success!

38. Thank you and I wish everyone an enjoyable evening ahead.

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## English Translation

### **Nurturing a Contributing Community**

12. Respected guests, the spirit of citizenry is nurtured through a community that actively contributes to community development and nation building. A minority community can contribute effectively when it is empowered. An empowered community is one that can be independent. It is the same for a small country like Singapore, that needs to stand firm to remain sovereign.

13. Today, our Malay/Muslim community is more empowered and has built a strong foundation for itself, due to two unique factors.

14. **First, courage.** We have the courage to face critical challenges affecting our community and find ways to solve them to achieve progress.

15. **We have demonstrated this through the past forty years. Then, the Malay community was confronted by worrying trends in educational outcomes. The community leaders were courageous in accepting this reality.** They acknowledged that Singapore's system of meritocracy is one of our core values. We therefore cannot fall on quotas or affirmative action as a quick and easy solution. We have to work hard to achieve progress and to attain the appropriate qualifications and recognition. Mendaki was thus formed for this purpose. Over decades, our community leaders worked together and expended efforts to advance the community's educational attainment.

a) Because of this, we were able to overcome the issue of school drop-outs in a comprehensive manner. In fact, we now have more Malay students qualifying for tertiary institutions. The number of university graduates continues to rise significantly, with the numbers doubled between 2010 and 2020.

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- b) With greater education outcomes, more Malays are holding PMET jobs and employed in fast-growing sectors such as Information & Communications
- c) These improvements have raised the median household income per capita year after year.

16. Courage has also enabled us to tackle other vicious social issues, such that we have lowered high offending rates. Now, it will also help us address emerging and increasingly complex issues. This includes helping our workers to obtain the skills and qualifications to remain relevant, addressing mental health issues, or tackling health issues like hypertension and diabetes. Courage has been key to our progress. We must continue to be courageous and not be embarrassed by the issues we face – because courage has brought progress for us as successful individuals and as a community.

17. **The second factor is togetherness.** The gotong royong spirit is a cultural aspect of the Malays, which has been deeply embedded as part of the community's DNA. It has instilled a sense of mutual help that has enabled us to make great strides since the early years of Singapore's independence.

18. Our community will always be empowered if we remain united to tackle problems courageously. **It is in this spirit that we formed M<sup>3</sup> five years ago, to empower the Malay/Muslim community to act collectively to solve different issues and inspire success.**

- a. To date, M<sup>3</sup> has successfully conducted various initiatives such as marriage support programmes through Bersamamu, youth engagement through mentoring programmes, outreach to families in rental flats through Project Dian@M<sup>3</sup>, support ex-offenders through FITRAH, and improving our health through Saham Kesihatan.
- b. I am pleased to see more professionals who are giving back through the M<sup>3</sup> network, in strengthening our youth mentoring programmes.

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- c. I thank all our volunteers and colleagues from Muis, MENDAKI and MESRA, Malay/Muslim Organisations (MMOs) and other community partners for all these meaningful efforts and partnerships.
- d. **We will mark the five-year anniversary of M<sup>3</sup> later this year.** This will be a wonderful opportunity for us to reflect and celebrate our community's progress and to show our appreciation to all who have stepped forward to share their time, talent and resource for our community.

### Thinking Long-Term

19. Respected guests, in responding to the changing needs of our community and Singapore in the future, we must harness new strengths if we want to remain empowered as a community.

- a. During the early stages of Singapore's development, we had several wealthy pioneers. Philanthropists such as Hajjah Fatimah dan Syed Omar Ali Aljunied bequeathed their wealth to *wakaf* for the development of mosques in Singapore.
- b. As our population increased, we saw the need to build more mosques to meet the growing religious needs of our community. The previous generation collected small monthly contributions from working Muslim adults through the Mosque Building Fund, or now known as MBMF, which has supported the building of 26 mosques in our heartlands.

20. Looking ahead, land leases for mosques will need to be renewed, and this will certainly be more costly than before. We also need to fund our growing religious education and social needs of our community.

21. Like our forefathers, **we have to plan ahead to meet our future needs. We need to invest early to grow our assets.** We also need a new approach.

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- a. **We have a solid foundation in this aspect.** The community has at least \$2 billion in liquid assets. This is estimated based on the approximately \$60 million zakat collection annually.
- b. The total accumulated assets in the community is increasing. I have proposed the creation of Wakaf Masyarakat Singapura (WMS) to harness the wealth we have accumulated as a community. This will allow everyone to be a “wakif” by contributing to the “wakaf”. In basic terms, WMS invests in the returns and will not liquidate the principal funds raised. These returns will go towards supporting a wide and flexible range of community needs, including developing our asatizah.

22. Much work has gone into the implementation of WMS. In 2020, the WMS Advisory Panel led by Mr Abu Bakar Mohd Nor have engaged extensively with stakeholders on operationalising WMS. This has built the foundations for WMS. I thank Mr Abu Bakar and the members of this Panel.

23. Respected guests, earlier this year, the Government amended the Administration of Muslim Law Act (AMLA) to establish the legal foundation for WMS. **We will be forming the Pro-Tem Committee to oversee the execution of plans for WMS. We will also convene an Islamic Legacy Planning Workgroup to educate the community so that they can support WMS.**

- a. **Mr Bahren Shaari has agreed to Chair the Pro-Tem** which will form the Board of WMS later, while **Mr Zhulkarnain Rahim will head the Islamic Legacy Planning Workgroup.** Thank you, Mr Bahren and Mr Zhulkarnain.
- b. They will encourage our community to practise legacy planning and bequeath part of our wealth as a wakaf towards WMS to fulfil the long-term religious needs of our community. This also includes leaving a will which is also an important religious practice for Muslims. Muis has designated this **August as Wakaf Month**, to facilitate the community’s understanding in this effort.

24. Just as how the past generations contributed to the next generation, it is now our opportunity to do the same. Let us contribute to the WMS once it is launched in August, as our contribution for this world and investment for the hereafter.

25. Respected guests, **not all Muslim minority communities share the same experience as us or have the ability to be empowered through the key factors which I mentioned earlier -- courage and togetherness – due to various reasons. As a result, they may not be as fortunate as us.**

- a. There are minority Muslim communities living in developed nations but face issues meeting basic religious needs, like establishing Muslim burial grounds. Their countries may have laws to fulfil the needs of their citizens, including Muslims; but these laws do not necessarily benefit them.
- b. There are also communities facing a new situation where the new government got elected for championing majority interests in administering the country. In such places, the status of minorities has changed, and are now marginalised or confronted with violence.

26. These examples serve as a sobering reminder to us of two things:

- a. First - how **we, in Singapore, must never take our mutual trust and social harmony for granted**, as it is neither a given nor permanent state of affairs but nurtured over time by every member of the society.
- b. Second – every community, minority or majority, **needs to respect each other and work together by playing our respective roles in the best interest of our society and country.**

### **Building a Cohesive Society**

27. This brings me back to citizenry.



28. Mufti shared a hadith in his Khutbah on Hari Raya this year, *“Whichever part of the date palm tree you take, it is sure to be of benefit.”* Mufti elaborated that the character of a confident, resilient and empowered Muslim is like a date palm tree that provides protection to others and contributes meaningfully to the world. If a Muslim were to be a date palm tree, then our community is like a date farm! A farm because of our collective strength when we work together with other communities in various aspects, building trust with other communities and the Government.

29. This year, the Edelman Trust Barometer reported that Singapore has among the highest scores for trust in Government and other institutions, and this has increased since 2020. This is testament to the concerted efforts of the Government, community leaders, and ordinary citizens to build that reservoir of trust with one another, as we forge a shared future together. For trust anchors citizenry.

30. The survey also implies that every community, including our Malay/Muslim community, is playing our role in being an active citizen, and in building a cohesive society. This would not have been achieved without courage and togetherness of our community which has empowered us. This is the pillar of citizenry.

### **Religious Leadership**

31. I am glad that our religious leadership have led us well on citizenry matters. They help us navigate through issues of national concern and keeping our sense of citizenry alive.

- a. For example, Muslims rallied against terrorism after 9/11 and the Religious Rehabilitation Group (RRG) supports the government’s fight against extremism to this day.
- b. Our Mufti admirably demonstrated citizenry when he and Chief Rabbi exchanged letters to assure continued support for one another as the conflict in Gaza escalated. In these challenging times, Mufti also reminded us to heal hatred with compassion and repel evil with goodness. But he did not abandon

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his principles and expressed his disappointment when the Israel Embassy uploaded an unacceptable Facebook post. These actions speak volumes of the principles of our religious leadership and add up to bolster the citizenry of our community.

32. Therefore, we need to develop pragmatic approaches as we confront new and unique issues in this digital age. Our religious scholars need to develop principles that can be applied in our daily lives to help Muslims address these emerging issues objectively and not just emotionally, with moderation and not extremism, in context and not in absolute terms. Such that it cultivates a deep instinct for Muslims in Singapore to navigate their identity as Singaporeans, while being true to our faith.