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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DR. JOHN CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY

AND MINISTER OF STATE FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,

AT THE BURSARY PRESENTATION CEREMONY OF THE

PMBM SCHOLARSHIP FUND BOARD, AT DBS AUDITORIUM

ON 28 AUGUST 1999, AT 3.00 PM

It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon to officiate at the  
34th Bursary Presentation Ceremony of Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Memorial  
Scholarship Fund Board, or better known by its abbreviation LBKM.

Thirty four years may not be long in the history of an organisation. But  
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LBKM is to be congratulated for its effort in being able to award bursary and financial assistance annually for the last thirty four years. To date, there are thousands of Muslim students who have benefited from these awards and many of them are already holding good positions and are successful in their careers. The amount that has been disbursed so far is close to four and a half million dollars.

LBKM is one of the pioneering self-help organisations within the Malay-Muslim community. It started in 1965 in response to the low socio-economic status of the Malay-Muslim community then. Its mission then and now, is to offer financial assistance to needy students. LBKM believes that the route to social progress and a good life is through education.

Today, the community can feel proud of its achievements. In education, the Malay students have shown good progress. The academic results in the various national examinations have shown steady improvements. Some Malay students have shown exceptionally good results in their examinations in schools and institutions of higher learning. As you are surely aware, there are Malay students winning merit awards. One notable example is the excellent achievement of Dr Mansor Jalil. He was awarded a First Class Honours Degree in Physics and a PhD in Electrical Engineering from Cambridge University. His research work has been published in respectable journals overseas. He has recently been awarded the Anugerah Jauhari by Berita Harian and McDonalds for his excellent achievements. He has done the Malay Community and Singapore proud. He is the role model for many more Malay-Muslim students to follow.

One key improvement within the Malay-Muslim community is the spread of students across all disciplines. I am happy to note that there is a significant proportion of Malay-Muslim students taking laboratory-based courses both in the polytechnics and universities. These courses would include engineering, science, and medicine. This is a good sign. This trend is also evident among the bursary recipients gathered here today. Allow me to congratulate the Malay-Muslim community for this achievement.

With rapid advancements being made in science and technology, new knowledge is being added in all fields of human endeavour. Medical science is making new discoveries in the treatment of diseases. Significant changes are being made in the area of computers and telecommunications. More importantly is the speed at which these changes occur. They are happening very fast. We have no choice but to keep abreast with these changes. If not, we will be left behind.

Getting a good education and upgrading ourselves is the key to facing these changes. In this respect, I am glad to note that the Malay Members of Parliament and community leaders will be holding a National Convention on Knowledge Based Economy (KBE) in December. As I understand it, a lot of work has begun to prepare for the Convention. Several focus-group discussions on education, employment and business opportunities in the new economy are being conducted. I would urge you to support this effort. As we face the new age, new ideas are needed. You can contribute by participating in the discussions and giving your feedback and suggestions via the internet web page. This current effort bears out very clearly, the self-help and gotong-royong spirit of the community in tackling new challenges together.

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One important reason why Singaporeans have been able to enjoy a high standard of living is because of the sacrifice and commitment of the previous generation. Similarly, all of the students who are present here today are able to pursue your education because of the pioneering spirit of the previous generation of students and leaders. They have worked hard and sometimes against difficult odds. You too must continue to work hard in order to ensure that what your community has achieved is maintained and improved. I can understand that at times there may be setbacks. But setbacks can help you to be wiser and stronger than before. Life is after all, a long process of learning and re-learning.

For those who are successful, you have a duty to contribute back to society. This is the history of Singapore, that is, of one generation doing their part to help the next generation. One way that all of you can contribute is to spend some time with organisations such as LBKM or MENDAKI. As future leaders of your community, it behooves upon you to ensure that key institutions and organisations have access to the best talent in the community. It is through self-renewal that an organisation or society ensures its progress and continuity.

I wish to congratulate all the LBKM bursary recipients today. May your success benefit the society and the nation.

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