

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE OPENING CEREMONY  
OF AMP MILLENNIUM SHOW, SINGAPORE EXPO HALL 4A AT 6.40 PM ON FRI, 19 NOVEMBER 1999

This is an exciting and challenging time for all of us. We are at the dawn of the new century and there are so many new things for us to learn and adopt as a result of developments in science and technology. The mind-boggling advances in information technology will have an especially significant impact on how we and our children live, work and play in the new millennium.

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2 There must be greater public awareness of the importance of information technology and how it can help us succeed in this new world. The Association of Muslim Professionals (AMP) has done well in this aspect. In 1996, the AMP supported the National Computer Board's computer roadshows, and later launched its own roadshows in shopping malls and mosques. I am told that some 40,000 people have visited and participated in the roadshows.

The AMP has also promoted IT training to students and workers in the Malay/Muslim community. For example, the AMP has supported the mass IT training on Internet organised by the National Computer Board in 98.

3 In this new world, globalisation is a development which we cannot fight against. We must strive to be competitive in the global marketplace, by embracing and making use of new technology. At the same time, we must jealously guard our own culture, traditions and values and remain as one united people, despite being more

cosmopolitan and open to outside influences, norms and values. Against this backdrop, the Millennium Show organised by the AMP provides an excellent opportunity for visitors to 'see the future and its challenges' and to understand the new knowledge-based economy.

4 Parents who want to know what the new education system means for their children entering school in Year 2000 should visit the Education and Careers section of the exhibition. Workers and those who are entering the workforce will appreciate the section on Manpower 21. It highlights Singapore's transformation into a knowledge-based economy and how workers can learn new skills and master new technologies.

5 These are some of the changes and developments that will pose great challenges to parents, youth, workers, indeed every family in Singapore. We need to encourage and motivate them to undergo lifelong learning to enhance their capabilities, remain relevant and thrive in the new economy. We must reach out to as many families as possible and deliver this important message. This is not the sole responsibility of the Government. It must be a collective effort among the State, the private sector and community organisations such as AMP. The Millennium Show is an example of such a collective effort.

6 The NCB is supporting the show, given that IT is one of the key driving forces in the economy. Visitors can learn about IT and the internet when they visit the show. The Productivity and Standards Board and the ITE are also involved. They will help visitors to enhance their skills and even to register for training courses.

7 But I believe it is the efforts by community organisations that will be most crucial. They know the situation on the ground. They are in the best position to help their members understand the challenges they face. More importantly, the better-off in the community should assist those who may have difficulties in coping with the rapid developments taking place in society.

8 The recently concluded convention on knowledge-based economy (KBE) organised by the Malay/Muslim community called for more creative programmes to assist low skilled workers and to help parents manage the demands of the new economy. These are laudable programmes which should be supported by everyone in the Malay/Muslim community. The Malay/Muslim community would be better off if workers are willing to upgrade and adopt a culture of life long learning and if Malay/Muslim parents become more effective in managing family life.

9 The success of efforts to prepare the Malay/Muslim community for the new economy requires the involvement of every member of the community.

Creative programmes should be developed to further entrench the importance of this effort in the minds and hearts of your community.

10 This show is a good example of reaching out via a creative approach. It is like a one-stop centre that provides parents the opportunity to attend family talks,

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workshops and family activities that can enhance family ties. Apart from learning new things, those who need specific assistance or are keen to upgrade themselves can satisfy their interests and concerns whilst visiting the show.

11 I am confident that your community, through its collective will, is able to develop better programmes based upon the set of recommendations that you have agreed upon at the recent KBE convention.

12 I would like to commend the AMP in particular for making this effort. I like to encourage parents and children, teachers and students, bosses and workers, young and old, to visit the show and discover the new experiences that have been lined up for them, and to prepare for lifelong learning to ensure a better future in the new millennium.

Thank you.

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