

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR ZAINUL ABIDIN RASHEED, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (FOREIGN AFFAIRS)
AND MP FOR CHENG SAN GR,

AT MENDAKI-MDIS SIGNING CEREMONY, 3.00 PM, THURSDAY,

24 JUNE 1999, AT YAYASAN MENDAKI CONFERENCE ROOM

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Assalamualaikum and a very good afternoon to one and all.

This morning, I heard over radio: When was the last time you saw a happy face at the MRT station. I did take the MRT just now and guess what, it wasn't easy to find many happy faces. But I wouldn't digress and try to psychoanalyse that statement. Suffice here for me to ask, guess what that advertisement was about? It was about inviting people to attend a course on entrepreneurship; technopreneurship, to be specific. Happy faces, MRT and entrepreneurship? Well, I won't fault them on creativity. They certainly got my attention.

But as for now, our focus is the MENDAKI-MDIS partnership. I am indeed very happy to be here this afternoon to officiate the launching of the Professional Certificate in Entrepreneurship Development (PCED).

This product is the result of a happy collaboration between Yayasan MENDAKI and the Management Development Institute of Singapore, MDIS.

Similarly, I trust MDIS will remember a happy face last year, when I officiated its Graduation Ceremony. In fact there were many happy faces that day, as those graduates know the value of the certificates they held in their hands. The certificates were symbolic of the reward for their hard work at enhancing their academic qualifications and improving their skills.

For this reason, I find the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the two organisations on the PCED today particularly meaningful.

The MOU between the respected MDIS and MENDAKI is laudable as it represents a course toward a worthy cause. Upliftment and self-enhancement have been MENDAKI's call and MDIS rallying alongside will certainly help.

I am told that this Professional Certificate in Entrepreneurship Development is assured of both national and international recognition. This is because it is recognised by the Edith Cowan University, Western Australia, which in turn is a registered member of RATE, The Register of Australian Tertiary Education.

Acquiring a PCED will also open a path to a diploma programme and a degree course for those who wish to continue their studies.

The PCED is the second joint project between MENDAKI and the MDIS. The first was the successful series of business seminars that were held for two consecutive years in 1996 and 1997.

I was told that a few more are in the pipeline. This reflects very well on both organisations.

The launch of the PCED today is most timely. With the government aggressively promoting a Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) or Knowledge Economy, and the Malay/Muslim community pushing hard on the same horizon, courses such as the PCED provide opportunities for people to upgrade themselves to stay relevant and employable.

Those intending to start their own small business should seize the opportunity to learn the fundamentals and the intricacies of a small business and how to manage it profitably. It is critical that the Malay community understand that entrepreneurship, more so technopreneurship, will play an important role in the future KBE. As many as possible members of the community should try to become entrepreneurs/technopreneurs or become employable in those fields.

But what is the much-talked-about KBE or the new economy? When we talk about the new economy, we are talking about a world in which people work mainly with their brains instead of their hands, a world in which innovation is more important than mass production and where knowledge is more important than natural resources.

Land, labour and capital do not disappear but they will become secondary factors. However, knowledge by itself produces nothing. Knowledge has to come hand in hand with creativity and innovation.

This new economy will touch every one of us. As we cannot run away from it, we have no choice but to stay put and familiarise ourselves, to come to terms with it, and

to learn how to exploit it to meet our needs.

The recent economic slowdown provides a valuable lesson. We saw, read and heard of many businesses that had to retreat and finally surrender to the downturn.

The survivors now realise the importance of information, knowledge and innovation. You need all these crucial elements in order to create new and quality products that could sell in an increasingly competitive environment. You need them also for value-added services if you want to retain and expand your customer base.

Recently The World Competitiveness 1999 Yearbook lists Singapore as the second most competitive country after the United States. Yes, this is a magnificent performance for a tiny island, without any natural wealth, and with only about 3.2 million heads.

For Singapore to maintain its ranking and enhance its global competitiveness further, it has to mesh itself into the grid of this New Economy.

The Singapore government has done its part. It has done its homework, laid the groundwork and formulated the appropriate policies.

Now it is for the people and the workers to adjust themselves to the new realities. They can help Singapore by helping themselves. For the people are the only major resource we have.

Every Singaporean must realise that learning is not meant only for children and youths. A knowledge-based individual will not see change as an unwelcome intrusion but a challenge. He is the type who thrives in a creative environment.

Many mass-based organisations such as the National Trade Union Congress are already in the forefront to change mindsets and to provide retraining opportunities at various levels of competence.

I am happy to see MENDAKI and MDIS also playing their part in this drama. Both are non-profit organisations working towards the common goal of making Lifelong Learning a part of our national life.

As MENDAKI is also in the process of setting up a one-stop centre for Lifelong Learning, there is ample scope for further collaboration between them. In today's world, preparing for our tomorrow is no longer just a question of earning a living but in fact learning a living.

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I wish both MENDAKI and the MDIS all the very best for their future endeavours. We wish their PCED programme every success.

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