



EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER EVENT ON 23 MAY, 8.00 P.M.

FACT SHEET

23 May 2018

PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB VISITS HARMONY CENTRE AND JOINS THE BREAKING OF FAST AT MASJID AN-NAHDHAH

President of the Republic of Singapore Halimah Yacob graced an *iftar* (break fast) function at Masjid An-Nahdhah at Bishan this evening. Also in attendance were Minister for the Environment and Water Resources and Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs, Mr Masagos Zulkifli, Member of Parliament of Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC (Bishan East-Thomson), Chong Kee Hiong, Chief Executive of Muis, Hj Abdul Razak Maricar, Mufti of Singapore, Sohibus Samaha Dr Mohamed Fatris Bakaram as well as community and grassroots leaders.

2 Prior to the *iftar*, President Halimah and Mr Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee were brought on a tour of the Harmony Centre, which is housed in the mosque. The centre, opened in 2007, is one of Muis' key initiatives to promote a greater understanding of Islam and Muslims within Singapore's multi-racial and multi-religious society.

3 The two-storey Harmony Centre showcases exhibits, artifacts and information on Islamic civilisation and lifestyle. The Centre has, over the years, build greater network and bonds with other communities through interfaith dialogue and engagement, and has become an integrated hub for the promotion of greater understanding and engagement of all faith communities

4 During the tour, President Halimah had the opportunity to interact with leaders of neighbouring organisations such as Zion Bishan Bible-Presbyterian Church, Girl Guides Singapore and Ministry of Education Language Centre (Bishan), and members of Masjid An-Nahdhah's Mosque Management Board (MMBs). President Halimah was also briefed on the Harmony Centre and Masjid An-Nahdhah's engagement efforts and activities.

HARMONY CENTRE

1 The Harmony Centre was officially opened by the Prime Minister of Singapore, Mr Lee Hsien Loong, on 7 October 2006. The Centre represents one of Islamic Religious Council of Singapore's (Muis) key initiatives, to bring about a greater understanding of Islam and Muslims amongst the multi-racial and multi-religious society of Singapore.

2 The Centre aims to build greater network and bonds with other communities through interfaith dialogue and engagement. Harmony Centre hopes to build an even more cohesive and resilient platform between religions. This is to ensure that racial and religious harmony, a cornerstone of Singapore's development is preserved.

3 Harmony Centre is a culmination of years of effort by Muis to be open and transparent in presenting the Singaporean Muslim way of life and culture of Singaporeans. This is achieved through programmes such as mosque open houses, mosque visit, learning journeys and collaborative initiatives between mosques and grassroots as well between national and community-led organisations.

Harmony Centre Objectives:

- a) To promote a greater understanding of the true teachings of Islam and Muslims in Singapore.
- b) Enhance inter-faith dialogue and engagement at all levels: leadership, community, grassroots, youths and students. This is done through seminars, workshops, experiential learning journeys, visits and other platforms.
- c) To strengthen social bonding between the different faith communities so as to build a more cohesive and resilient society.

4 The aim of the Centre is "Building Bonds of Humanity" is in line with the wider mission of the Centre "to set the Islamic agenda, shape religious life and forge the Singaporean Muslim Identity". Other narratives include:

- Appreciates other civilisations, and is self-confident to interact with and learn from other communities.
- Well-adjusted as contributing members of a multi-religious society and secular state
- Be a blessing to all and promotes universal principles and values
- Inclusive and practices pluralism, without contradicting Islam

- Be a model and inspiration to all

5 At the same time, the Harmony Centre also serves as an integrated hub for the promotion of greater understanding and engagement of all faith communities. This is made possible through the many inter-faith programmes undertaken by the Centre via the three key thrusts of the Centre:

Training - to build capacity in interfaith dialogue and engagement

Learning - to deepen understanding of the different faiths

Engagement - to build bridges and relationships among the faith groups

6 These three strategic thrusts will be elaborated and presented after the tour. Harmony Centre tour consists of five sections:

- i. Islam and Interfaith
- ii. Multi-religious Singapore
- iii. Islamic Civilization Historical Timeline
- iv. Relationship between God, Man and His Creations
- v. Splendour of Islamic Art (Artefact Room)

7 Harmony Centre acknowledges that Islam has a long history of interactions with diverse faith communities of the world. The inclusive nature of Islam and the virtue of respecting and living peacefully with other faith communities is a cornerstone of Islam that is exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), during his lifetime. Therefore Muslims in Singapore are enjoined and duty-bound to strive for harmonious living and to be a blessing to all creations.

Promoting Interfaith Beyond Harmony Centre

8 In promoting interfaith beyond Harmony Centre, the Centre received 838 international visitors (10% of its visitors). Some key examples include Malaysia High Commission, UK High Commission, Prince of Wales Prince Charles, Australian Member of Parliament Mr. Ed Husic, UK Member of Parliament Mr. Sajid Javid, Paris Foreign Mission Society, Taichung City Government Civil Affairs Department, Palestinian High Commissioner, Journalists from Nepal of 'Asia Journalism Fellowship'.

9 The Centre's works were also researched by students and lecturers from Indonesia, International Islamic University of Malaysia, Tehran University, Tokyo University, Thailand Mahidol University and also social workers from Hong Kong.

MASJID AN-NAHDHAH

Masjid An-Nahdhah was officially opened to the public on 7 October 2006 to serve the needs of the Muslim community around the Bishan area. The mosque can accommodate about 4,000 people and also Muis' Harmony Centre where visitors could learn of the Muslim community and Islam as practiced in multi-cultural Singapore.

Design Concept

2 In line with the concept of a mosque being multi-functional with the prime role facilitating the creation of an excellent and gracious Muslim community, the design approach goes beyond the traditional notion and expectations of a mosque. Apart from fulfilling its basic function as a centre for religious practices, the design encompasses and provides for the mosque to perform other pillars of the mosque's activities - *Religious Education, Family, Youth and Social Development* as well as as a centre for *Information Services and Referrals*.

3 Masjid An-Nahdhah architectural concept reflects the Muslim community's support towards multi-religious integration and coexistence with the community at large. Adopting an open and interactive approach, the mosque's modern Islamic facade is unique and blends well with the surroundings, projecting a positive image of Islam that is not only contemporary but one which is also outward looking in promoting religious awareness within the larger Singapore.

4 The distinctive minaret is symbolic as a unification of the five pillars of Islam while the wall facade expresses dynamism signifying modern day relevance. The prayer hall boasts a decorative coloured glass feature with Arabic inscription and marble cladded columns accentuates the mihrab wall. Flanked by solid timber doors dressed with intricately designed motifs, the sense of calm and serenity in the hall culminates with a decorative ceiling illuminated by carefully focused direct lighting.

Programmes & Services

Islamic Learning & Worship

5 Masjid An-Nahdhah organises classes, courses, programs and lectures for the public. The mosque also conducts classes in English and Malay in the form of Adult Islamic Learning (ADIL) and arranges various "customised topics" workshops to cater to the community's learning needs. Quranic courses such as Qiraati for Muslimah and Marhaban for Muslimah are held during Wednesdays. One of the signature class is *Jati Diri Wanita*, conducted by Ustazah Kamariah Abd Halim which has consistent number of students held at the Multi-Purpose Hall on Fridays.

6 Every weekend, aLIVE@ An-Nahdhah caters classes for the different age groups such as Kids (5-8yrs old), Tweens (9-12yrs old), Teens (13- 16yrs old), Youth (17 to 25 yrs old) that covers topics such as Islamic Concepts, Ethics, Islamic Jurisprudence and Islamic History and Civilisation for around 370 students. Apart from weekend classes, the mosque also conducts Quranic and Solat (Prayer) Literacy programme during weekdays to educate the young on the recitation of the Al-Quran and to ensure that the students are able to perform their prayers in their daily lives.

7 Masjid An-Nahdhah's youth group, named *Munawwarin*, actively engages the community's youth through talks, camps, *Qiyam* (night prayers), outdoor activities and sports. Amongst the highlights of the youth is TAIF (Thank Allah Its Friday) which features topics that are close to the youths' hearts, aimed at addressing their concerns and questions by the Youth Development Officer.

Social Development & Community Engagement

8 In efforts to engage the financially assisted families, Masjid An-Nahdhah visits residents at nearby Sin Ming Estate annually to give them porridge or hampers during Ramadan. These residents are also invited during special occasions such as Eidulfitri and Eiduladha in which some part of our Fidyah funds are distributed to them.

9 Masjid An-Nahdhah also holds programmes that aim to build social trust by organising inter-faith carnivals, inter-faith talks, GRC *iftar* and collaborations with community partners such as Mendaki Tuition scheme. During Ramadan, Masjid An-Nahdhah hosts *iftar* for the many students, organisations and different faith groups that visit the mosque to understand more about Islam and Ramadan.