

# PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY MR ABDULLAH TARNUGI,  
ACTING MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND  
MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF MUSLIM AFFAIRS,  
AT THE SINGAPORE INDIAN RELIGIOUS HARMONY-CUM-CULTURAL  
CONFERENCE AT MASJID AL-AMIN AUDITORIUM  
ON SUNDAY, 3 JULY 1994 AT 3.00 PM**

As the world gears itself for the new world order following the collapse of the Soviet empire and post Cold War, there is a warm wave in the Muslim world to ensure that it remains relevant and play its role in the new world.

There is this newly-energised debate within the International Ummah on the need for spiritual renewal and the assertion of the dignity of Islam and the Muslims in world affairs. It is a continuing debate not only about the realities of God's plan for mankind but also about the realities of politics, the here and now, of power, of influence and of wealth. And, lately, of competition too.

Competition will grow keener, among ourselves and between ourselves and the rest of the world and how we prepare ourselves - both educationally and in skills - will determine how far we will go in ensuring our role as partners in progress. It is a goal we must all work hard for to continue to be relevant and to play a meaningful role for our community, for our nation.

The stream of society continues to flow, in fact even more rapidly now than ever. We cannot afford to have any section of the community on the fringes - whether in form or in mind. We must not have groups of people to seek exclusivity, and to remain on the peripheries, particularly under the cloak of religion. Worse still are deviationist teachings or personality-cult cultures which seek not only to isolate their followers from

mainstream society but also from mainstream Islam itself. To do so, in our context, is to breed suspicion, distrust and disunity.

I am therefore happy to note that the Indian Muslims are in the mainstream here. This is a two-way process. The Indian Muslims must not be made to feel isolated from the larger Muslim community and its institutions. In response, however, the former must want to feel and be a part of the local Muslim community. We must get our act together and, InshaAllah [God willing], there will be meaningful progress.

At the Indian Muslim Community level, there must be unity of purpose and action. Dissension among yourselves and a fractious leadership will only result in a weak and divide community. In this context, I see the formation of FIM (Federation of Indian Muslims) and UIMA (United Indian Muslim Associations) as positive developments.

I see that the Indian Muslims are represented in the MENDAKI Board of Directors and they also nominate members of their community for the MUIS Council. But the community must also realise that representation is not a birth right, for we must, for the sake of everyone, ensure that those we choose are capable, honest and sincere.

Whether it is the Indian Muslims or the Muslims in Singapore as a whole, we are on the same grid - the ummah.

Singapore has won its place on the global grid because it has grasped the fact that we are all members of one international community and we are all living in the same moment. It is not something we can opt out of.

We must take up the spirit of Hijrah, the spirit of renewal, with enthusiasm. We must stop following ourselves in circles. We should break free and be responsible for our own advancement. We need to work hard for it.

I would like to congratulate UIMA for organising this conference. I thank UIMA for inviting me to officiate today's function and I offer my doa [prayer] for a meaningful and successful conference, insyaAllah.

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