



21 August 2017

PPIS on the Prime Minister's National Day Rally Speech

The Singapore Muslim Women's Organisation (PPIS) wishes to respond to the points raised by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his National Day Rally speech made on 20 August 2017.

On the Pre-School Initiatives

PPIS welcomed the three initiatives proposed by PM Lee.

Provisions for more pre-school spaces for children between 0 to 4 years will provide parents with the alternative care their children need while parents are at work. PM Lee's promise to make pre-schools to remain affordable, especially for the low income, will make quality pre-school education accessible to all.

The setting up of the National Institute for Early Childhood Education (NIEC) is timely. NIEC, with better resources and governance, can contribute to standardised quality of pre-school teachers. The institute can also channel resources to strategic areas of development and perhaps, employ researchers to mine deeper knowledge on early childhood development; something which might not be viable or affordable for the private sector.

However, PPIS is also concerned that a centralised institution might hamper innovation, which are mainly driven by competition in the private sector. PPIS is mindful that educational philosophies and approaches are diverse, having their own merits. A centralised teaching institute may inadvertently narrow and slow down the evolution of new ideas.

PPIS currently runs six (6) Early Childhood Education (ECE) centres with the 7th due to be ready in November 2017. Five of our ECE centres are already SPARKs accredited, with the sixth pending. Currently, PPIS' ECE centres are managed by our subsidiary 7oaks Pte Ltd to enable a more efficient operation and sustainable growth. PPIS remains optimistic that the proposed initiatives will contribute to better quality of care for our centres as well.

On the Issue of Diabetes

PPIS is keenly aware of the high incidence of diabetes amongst the Malay community. We agree with PM Lee that ageing healthily is vital in reducing the financial strain on the individual's medical cost and the pressure of caregiving on the family.

We are especially concerned that many Malay housewives in Singapore, who outlive their spouses and likely to be financially disadvantaged, will feel burdened to depend on their children for financial support of their medical treatment. This may result in their reluctance to seek treatment for their chronic condition, like diabetes, which will worsen their medical condition.

PPIS, through its revival of the Hawa Emas Programme (Golden Girls), which is a series of seminars, hopes to encourage Malay-Muslim women to actively maintain their physical, mental, spiritual and relational health as they grow into their later years. This initiative is now supported by the National Silver Academy and will begin its run in September 2017.

On the Development of Smart Nation

PPIS feels encouraged by the Smart Nation initiatives and supports the move towards getting everyone on board this journey. PPIS' most recent collaboration with the Codette Project - 'Progressing with Tech' seminar held on Saturday, 19 August 2017 - is one of our efforts to encourage women, especially, to embrace learning about technology and up-skilling in the pursuit of success.

The Codette Project is an interest group fronted by Muslim Women in the Tech Industry. We will continue to partner The Codette Project in their efforts to reach out to women to consider a career in the tech industries. When the aspiration of being a Smart Nation comes into fruition, we hope our women will be at the forefront, becoming 'prosumers' (both producer & consumer) of the technology that drives the nation into the future.