

MEDIA STATEMENT

19 August 2019

PPIS on the Prime Minister's National Day Rally 2019

The Singapore Muslim Women's Association (PPIS) wishes to respond to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's National Day Rally speech on 18 August 2019.

The Singapore Malay Identity

1. PPIS is pleased to hear the good words of PM Lee about the Malay community in Singapore.
2. As a pioneering women organisation that has grown from offering preschool education for Muslim children to providing services for women and family, PPIS will continue to aspire towards a community of excellence through its various programmes and services.

Preschool Education

3. Being part of the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA)'s Partner Operator Scheme (POP), PPIS remains committed to support women, children and their families by keeping our fees affordable and constantly looking for ways to build staff capabilities to raise quality in our preschools. We are also pleased to inform that six out of seven childcare centres under PPIS are SPARK-accredited; making sure that each child receives the best possible start to life.
4. PPIS is in favour of making quality early-years education more affordable and supports the increase in monthly income ceiling from \$7,500 a month to \$12,000. This will enable 30,000 more households to qualify for additional means-tested preschool subsidies, starting next year.
5. As of August 2019, we have a total enrolment of 827 students across seven PPIS childcare centres. We are pleased to share that a third of these students will be potentially eligible for the subsidies, following this enhancement.
6. In our work with families, PPIS also believes that this will have the biggest impact on middle-income families, especially the sandwiched couples with aging parents and young children – a group who was previously ineligible for some preschool subsidies. This enhancement will help to reduce the family's financial commitment.

7. PPIS aspires for this to be an opportunity for more parents to recognise the need of preschool education for their children. With the goal of lowering full-day preschool expenses, we also hope that it will allow both parents, including **mothers**, to go out and work with peace of mind.
8. We will continue to encourage families to enrol their children early, at age 3 or 4, for preschool education as this will enhance their school readiness at Primary One.

Increase of Retirement Age & Higher CPF Contributions

9. From the series of our focus group discussions, we realise that our Muslim women are not only impacted by issues of race, religion and gender at the workplace, but age as well. This shows that ageism affects women more, as our life expectancy is higher than men.
10. With this in mind, PPIS will be organising the upcoming Symposium *Wanita* 2019 (Women Symposium 2019) for our women to start thinking ahead for their silver years. An upstream engagement to get them to think and plan ahead in various aspects - finance, career and health.
11. Hence, while the government may raise the retirement age and re-employment age to make the working environment more inclusive, this must be matched with the reality on the ground.
12. We look forward to receiving more information on the “support package” that will be announced in next year’s Budget.
13. To sum up, PPIS is positive of the changes to come in the near future and acknowledges that everyone in the community has a part to play in progressing the nation and making these evolving policies and frameworks a success. Not just for future generations and the elderly, but also for the safeguard of our nation.