



RESEARCH PROGRAMME IN THE STUDY
OF MUSLIM COMMUNITIES OF SUCCESS

Commentary Series:

Internship Edition

Shaping a Modern Future: Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al- Hadi

Haninah Rehan

Contact us at RPCS@Muis.gov.sg



Synopsis

This article examines the substantial contributions of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi to the Malay-Muslim community, particularly highlighting his role in the transition towards modernity while maintaining cultural and religious integrity. Al-Hadi's innovative ideas and relentless advocacy are posited as foundational to the community's social progress. His visionary leadership and dedication to educational reform have left an enduring legacy, continuing to inspire the Malay-Muslim community's pursuit of self-determination and modernity.

Introduction

The Malay-Muslim community in Singapore has witnessed remarkable achievements and social progress over the years. Speaking at a dinner hosted by the community self-help group Mendaki and other Malay/Muslim organisations, Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong highlighted the community's advancements in education and employment, as well as its significant role in maintaining racial and religious harmony (Straits Times, 20 September 2024). This progress was hard-earned. In the early 20th century, the community faced numerous challenges, such as limited opportunities and sociopolitical constraints. In such an environment, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi can be regarded as a visionary leader whose innovative ideas and tireless advocacy are thought to have laid the groundwork for the changes that followed.

Born in Malaya in 1867, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi was more than a product of his time, as he sought to reconcile Islamic principles with the demands of a rapidly changing world in a forward-looking way. A bold writer, an eloquent speaker, and a relentless advocate for change, he challenged the status quo and encouraged a generation to reimagine their identity and place in a modern, multiethnic society.

Al-Hadi's contributions to governance, social reform, and education were transformative, arguably laying the groundwork for the community's adaptation to modernity while striving to maintain its cultural and religious integrity. His efforts have fostered a spirit of resilience and innovation within the Malay-Muslim community, making him a pivotal figure in their journey towards self-determination in a colonial context.

Syed Sheikh al-Hadi's significant contributions were very likely shaped by his unique upbringing and exposure to the wider intellectual milieu. Adopted by His Royal Highness Raja Ali Kelana, al-Hadi grew up within a palace that served as a vibrant hub of literary

activity, with the royal family—both male and female—encouraged to read and write (al-Hady, 1999). This environment instilled a strong commitment to learning and seeking knowledge. Additionally, al-Hadi was given the opportunity to accompany Raja Ali Kelana's children to the Middle East for religious and secular education (al-Hady, 1999). His travels exposed him to the latest religious and political developments in the region, particularly the doctrines of modern Islam championed by Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani and Sheikh Muhammad Abduh (al-Hady, 1999). During al-Hadi's time in Egypt, he reportedly studied under Sheikh Muhammad Abduh—a leading reformist thinker (*mujadid*) and rector of Al-Azhar University. He was known for his progressive and revolutionary ideas, which spurred significant social and intellectual changes in the Middle East, especially Egypt (Obor Ummah, 2011). It is therefore not surprising that al-Hadi was influenced by such reformist movements and sought to implement similar changes within the Malay society.

Educational Reform and Intellectual Development

During the early 20th century, the Malay-Muslim community experienced significant transformations, particularly in terms of education and intellectual development. Syed Sheikh al-Hadi believed that knowledge was crucial for social progress and advancement. He observed that the success of colonial powers in dominating the Muslim world was largely attributed to their advancements in knowledge and technology (al-Hadi, 1906). This observation highlighted his concern over the Malay community's reluctance to acquire scientific knowledge. Additionally, al-Hadi was critical of the existing educational systems in the Malay world, arguing that they fell short of fulfilling the true nature and objectives of Islamic education (Abu Bakar, 1994). For al-Hadi, education was not merely about acquiring information but also about promoting intellectual growth that aligned with Islamic principles and contributed to social progress.

During al-Hadi's era, Malaya's education system was divided into two main categories: the traditional system, which included *pondoks*, madrasahs, and *Sufi turuq*, and the modern system, which included Malay, English, Anglo-Tamil, and Anglo-Chinese schools (Ibid, 1994). The modern education system focused on secular subjects such as Science, Mathematics, English and Geography. On the other hand, traditional religious education has focused on the study of the *Quran*, *Hadith* and other classical Islamic texts. Their method of studying seemingly placed greater emphasis on rote learning and memorisation over critical thinking and analytical skills (Isahak & Abdul Rahim, 2020).

Syed Sheikh al-Hadi critiqued the traditional educational system for discouraging rational inquiry and promoting *taqlid*—often understood as the blind imitation of previous

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

scholars without questioning or understanding the underlying principles (Abu Bakar, 1994). To him, this stifled intellectual growth and hindered the community's ability to adapt to new challenges. In contrast, he argued that Islam encourages *ijtihad* – an independent interpretation of Islamic law based on the Quran, Hadith and *ijma'* (consensus) – which he saw as crucial for social development. Moreover, he believed that both religious and secular knowledge were essential for Muslims to study, viewing them not as separate but complementary. This perspective reflects his holistic approach to intellectual and spiritual development. Thus, he advocated for a balanced approach where religious and worldly knowledge complemented each other. For al-Hadi, integrating modern sciences into the curriculum was essential for the intellectual advancement of the Malay community (Isahak & Abdul Rahim, 2020).

One of al-Hadi's most significant contributions to education was the establishment of Madrasah al-Iqbal al-Islamiah in Singapore. Recognised as the first reformist madrasah in the region, this institution aimed to break away from the conventional educational system (Akgun & Zakariya, 2019). Unlike traditional madrasahs, it offered a curriculum that integrated both modern and religious education. The students were taught secular subjects such as English, Mathematics and Geography alongside Islamic studies. Unfortunately, the *madrasah* eventually closed due to a lack of support (al-Hadi, 1999). Al-Hadi also played a pivotal role in the founding of other reformist *madrasahs*, such as Madrasah al-Hadi and Madrasah al-Masyhur (al-Hadi, 1999). These *madrasahs* arguably laid the groundwork for future educational reforms.

Another innovative approach Syed Sheikh al-Hadi took to address the intellectual crisis within the Malay-Muslim community was his proposal to establish an Anglo-Malay school (Akgun & Zakariya, 2019). He believed such a school was necessary because most Malays were attending Malay vernacular schools, which he viewed as inferior to the Government English Schools (GES) in quality. In addition, many Malay students who graduated from these Malay vernacular schools struggled to gain admission to English schools because of issues such as age restrictions, financial constraints, and space limitations (Abu Bakar, 1994). Al-Hadi was deeply concerned with this gap in educational quality and believed that a new system was needed. In his article titled "The Need for an Anglo-Malay School", he proposed:

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

We should teach the pupils religious knowledge in Malay using citations from Arabic sources to teach what is obligatory, and then those citations should in turn be translated and clearly explained in Malay. As for English, we shall follow government regulations applicable to all who wish to establish schools, so that we can take part in the examinations set for such schools in order that our certificates will be recognised by the government. (al-Hadi, 1930).

By adopting the GES curriculum, al-Hadi hoped to increase job opportunities for Malay graduates. He envisioned a future where they would no longer be limited to roles such as “policemen, peons, customs, clerks, forest rangers and mining overseers” (Abu Bakar, 1994) but instead would have access to more diverse career opportunities in academic and professional fields. However, his idea for an Anglo-Malay school never took off; it remained an idea on the pages of al-Ikhwan and was never fully embraced by the Malay-Muslim community (Akgun & Zakariya, 2019). Despite this, his willingness to think outside the box and push for new ideas showed his strong commitment to educational reform, aiming to uplift the community both intellectually and economically.

Syed Sheikh al-Hadi’s vision for a modernised curriculum that integrates religious and secular education was remarkably forward-thinking for his time. His ideas were likely influenced by modernisation efforts in the Muslim world, particularly those of figures such as Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida, whose educational reforms sought to bridge religious teachings with contemporary knowledge (Abu Bakar, 1994). While al-Hadi was not the sole contributor, his philosophy may have played a role in inspiring future educational reforms, including Singapore’s current madrasah system. This system has evolved not only to balance traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary subjects but also to equip students with the skills necessary to excel in both religious and secular fields. By integrating modern sciences, mathematics, and languages alongside Islamic studies, al-Hadi foresaw the need for a more holistic educational approach that would prepare students to navigate the complexities of a globalised world.

The ripple effects of this educational reform can arguably be observed today, with madrasah graduates building successful careers across a wide range of fields. No longer limited to religious roles such as *imams* or religious teachers, *madrasah* students have branched out into non-religious fields in universities, later contributing to areas such as healthcare, law, and technology. In 2015, the National University of Singapore (NUS) Medical School admitted its first former madrasah students (Straits Times, 2015), exempli-

-fying this shift towards broader professional aspirations. Additionally, some graduates now aim to study law at local universities (Straits Times, 2024), further showcasing the community's expansion into new professional arenas.

Additionally, the 'SG Madrasah Alumni - Career & Education' section on the 'OurMadrasah' website highlights this growing diversity. This website serves as a directory that highlights the growing diversity in the career trajectories of madrasah graduates. It lists alumni who have ventured into fields such as human sciences, cybersecurity, and even intelligence (SG Madrasah Alumni, n.d.). This variety reflects the adaptability of *madrasah* students in mastering different skills, illustrating how the modern curriculum fosters such a diverse set of competencies.

Together, these examples demonstrate the growing competency of the Malay-Muslim community in areas traditionally seen as secular, showcasing how al-Hadi's educational philosophy fostered not only intellectual growth but also social mobility.

Women's Emancipation

During Syed Sheikh al-Hadi's time, the Malay-Muslim community faced a plethora of challenges, including deeply entrenched patriarchal views on the nature and role of women in Islam. There was a prevalent misconception that women were inherently inferior to men, confined to domestic roles as submissive daughters and wives. This belief was reinforced by a variety of social, cultural and economic factors. Educational opportunities for women were severely restricted, often due to parental indifference, extreme conservatism, the expectation that girls would serve as domestic help, and the perceived unlikelihood of them entering the workforce. Moreover, poverty and societal norms dictated that investing in a girl's education was futile—her primary role was seen to be within the home. These beliefs were further compounded by the notion that women were intellectually inferior to men (Abu Bakar, 1994). Such views were pervasive and deeply rooted in the community's mindset, reflecting the broader patriarchal dominance of society at that time.

Al-Hadi sought to challenge these entrenched views. As Abu Bakar (1994) explains, al-Hadi highlighted in his book '*Alam Perempuan*' (The World of Women), how early Muslim women played an active role in building and developing the Muslim community, contributing to politics, economics, religion, and society. However, during the Abbasid Dynasty, a shift occurred as men began to neglect their wives and focused more on their slave girls. This moral decline among men led women to neglect their responsibilities,

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

ultimately trapping them into a cycle of ignorance and degradation. Al-Hadi argued that this decline was not a result of Islamic teachings but rather the moral failure of men.

Recognising the detrimental effects of these patriarchal beliefs on the community's progress, al-Hadi vigorously opposed them. His rejection of these backwards views was deeply rooted in his understanding of Islam, which emphasises the importance of education and intellectual development for all, regardless of gender. Al-Hadi argued that the notion of women's intellectual inferiority contradicts Islamic principles, which encourage the pursuit of knowledge for both men and women. He believed that the parochial interpretations limiting women's roles to the household were a misrepresentation of Islamic teachings (Abu Bakar, 1994). Instead, he advocated for women's greater involvement in societal development, believing that the community could progress only if its women were educated and empowered.

As such, he eloquently stated in one of his articles in '*al-Ikhwan*' entitled "Changes in the Upbringing of Girls are Urgent":

Actually, the progress of a community depends on a number of factors. But the most essential factor is in the state of progress of women in the community. Similarly, the fall of a community results from a number of factors. But a factor which will quickly send a community down the drain is the ignorance and stupidity of its women. (al-Hadi, 1930, pp. 43-48)

Thus, this excerpt illustrates al-Hadi's belief that women's progress is synonymous with the community's progress. He understood that neglecting women's education and intellectual development was akin to undermining the entire community's potential. By framing women's empowerment as essential to societal progress, al-Hadi challenged the prevailing stereotypes and called for a re-evaluation of women's roles within the community.

Although Syed Sheikh al-Hadi was not the sole reformer advocating for women's rights in Malaya, his efforts were instrumental in initiating discussions that would eventually lead to broader societal changes. By challenging patriarchal norms and advocating for the education and empowerment of women, al-Hadi lit the torch for future generations to push the boundaries of women's roles within society. His efforts can be seen as the catalyst for the gradual yet significant progress that Malay-Muslim women in Singapore have achieved over the decades.

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

Today, this progress is evident in the high literacy rates among Malay-Muslim women and their active participation in various sectors of the workforce, demonstrating that al-Hadi's vision of women's emancipation has taken root. Furthermore, the representation of Malay-Muslim women in leadership roles across different fields serves as a testament to how far the community has come. For example, former President Halimah Yacob, who became Singapore's first female president in 2017, is an inspiring example of a Malay-Muslim woman breaking barriers and occupying the highest office in the nation. Similarly, Ustazah Nurdiana Hanim becoming the first woman appointed as the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Singapore Islamic Scholars and Religious Teachers Associate (Pergas), and Ms Guy Gazali becoming the first woman senior president at Syariah Court demonstrate the significant advancements Malay-Muslim women have made in assuming leadership positions within their community and broader society (Xueling, 2024).

This shift in the status of women not only demonstrates the increased competency of women across various sectors but also signals a change in society's values and beliefs, specifically concerning gender roles. Findings from the 2020 World Values Survey revealed changes in Singaporeans' views on gender roles since 2002. For example, in 2020, 69% of respondents disagreed with the statement that men are better political leaders than women are, up from 44% in 2002 (Ministry of Social and Family Development, 2022). The patriarchal dominance of the past is slowly eroding. While the proverbial glass ceiling still exists, cracks begin to form and steadily weaken.

As both men and women work together to challenge and reshape outdated gender norms, the cracks in the glass ceiling will continue to widen. With perseverance and dedication, the barriers that remain may eventually shatter, allowing women to truly stand as equals. To achieve this, we must take a page from al-Hadi's teachings. We need to push forward, persevere, and continue standing up for what is right.

Al-Hadi's advocacy for women's education and participation in public life was revolutionary for its time, contributing to the broader movement that has inspired generations of Malay-Muslim women to rise to leadership positions and contribute to both their community and the nation. His legacy reminds us that progress often stems from challenging deeply ingrained norms and striving for systemic change, even in the face of resistance.

Colonial Rules and Muslim Adaptation

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

Colonisation is often seen as a tragic chapter in world history, marked by exploitation and cultural subjugation. While Syed Sheikh al-Hadi was critical of British colonial rule, he viewed it pragmatically as a “glass half full” situation, recognising certain benefits in comparison to feudalistic rule—rule under Malay chiefs and sultans. His critique of the Malay monarchs stemmed from the fact that they were corrupt, oppressive and governed in a manner contrary to Islamic principles of justice and equality. He contrasted this with British colonial rule, which he viewed as more just and aligned with certain Islamic values such as justice, fairness, and the rule of law (Abu Bakar, 1994). In his writing, “The Real Cry”, al-Hadi remarked:

What is appropriate now is for you to be grateful for the British government’s intervention, which has benefitted you in that you have been released from the serfdom of your leaders, and you have been given laws which will not prevent you from seeking the road to progress and a better life. (al-Hadi, 1926)

The above quote expresses al-Hadi’s belief that British rule was the lesser of two evils. Despite its flaws, it offered more opportunities for justice and advancement than the local rulers ever did. He saw colonial rule as a chance for the Malay-Muslim community to break free from the oppressive practices of their own leaders and to adopt a more progressive path.

Al-Hadi supported the idea that Muslims could thrive under non-Muslim rule, provided that justice, knowledge, and opportunities for socioeconomic advancement were upheld. Al-Hadi viewed colonial rule as an opportunity for Muslims to engage with modern governance and adopt beneficial practices while maintaining their religious and cultural identity. He encouraged Muslims to capitalise on the educational and economic opportunities available under British governance to enhance their social and economic status (Abu Bakar, 1994).

Syed Sheikh al-Hadi’s favourable view of the British was quite unconventional for his time. He went so far as to describe the British as “the army of God, Rabb al-alamin, sent here to free us from the prison of stupidity, cruelty and fierceness of our own rulers, because the English are smart, respect the rules of government, world peace and prosperity” (al-Hadi, 1926). This perspective reveals how al-Hadi’s views were shaped by his direct experiences with the corruption and ineffectiveness of Malay rulers. He believed that the British, despite being non-Muslim, had introduced a system of governance that was, in many ways, aligned more closely with Islamic principles of justice

and order (Abu Bakar, 1994).

While al-Hadi's positive view of British rule might seem odd given the exploitative aspects of colonialism, it must be understood within the context of his time. The Malay-Muslim community was experiencing stagnation, and al-Hadi saw the need for reform and progress. He wrote extensively on the need for the community to wake up from its complacency and actively pursue improvement. His articles in '*al-Ikhwān*', such as "Can the Malays Escape Annihilation and Extinction" (1930) and "Islam Commands Exertion and Work" (1930), were attempts to raise awareness and motivate the community toward self-improvement.

His pragmatic stance suggests that Muslims can coexist peacefully and prosper under non-Muslim rule, as long as governance is just and provides freedom and opportunities for advancement. However, it is important to acknowledge that this perspective does not endorse colonialism but reflects his belief in adapting to circumstances for community survival. Al-Hadi's approach remains relevant today in pluralistic societies, particularly where Muslims are a minority. His views encourage a balanced perspective, acknowledging the reality of political circumstances while seeking to uphold Islamic values of justice and welfare within those frameworks.

Al-Hadi's pragmatic approach resonates strongly with Singapore's current context. The nation's secular governance, as highlighted by national leaders, promotes the integration of diverse communities within a framework of respect and inclusivity. Despite its secular nature, Singapore provides an environment where Muslims can actively practise their faith while fully participating in the nation's progress. This aligns with the concept of "citizenry", as highlighted by Minister Masagos Zulkifli in his Committee of Supply Debates 2023 speech. He emphasised that Muslims in Singapore, like other citizens, must not only thrive as a community but also actively contribute to the larger society. This reciprocity echoes the sentiment mentioned by Mufti Ustaz Dr. Nazirudin Mohd Nasir (2022) in his speech at the inaugural International Conference on Communities of Success (ICCOS) that when the state offers its citizens a safe space to live and practise their beliefs, they respond with acts of fairness (*al-birr*) and justice (*al-qist*), as guided by the Qur'an's instruction to work towards the common good. By promoting responsible citizenship, Singapore ensures that Muslims can contribute constructively to the nation's progress without compromising their Islamic principles. This creates a harmonious coexistence that respects both the secular nature of the state and the integrity of religious beliefs, reflecting a balanced and inclusive societal framework.

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

Thus, Al-Hadi's historical perspective offers a framework for navigating modern challenges, emphasising the importance of adapting to political realities while steadfastly maintaining religious commitments.

Conclusion

Ultimately, through his writings and publications, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of the Malay-Muslim community toward progress and modernity. His efforts contributed to the emergence of a new Malay-Muslim identity—one that embraces modern, global and scientific perspectives while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values.

Despite facing significant backlash for his progressive views, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi's vision was remarkably forward-thinking. While there is little evidence that explicitly demonstrates the influence of Syed Sheikh Hadi in the Malay-Muslim community today, the positive developments captured in this paper suggest the lasting impact of his ideals and a sustained tradition of Muslim reform in the region. His foresight and leadership in championing these ideas have shaped the community's evolution, aligning closely with the values and practices observed in contemporary Singapore.

Al-Hadi's legacy reminds us of the importance of intellectual inquiry, cultural preservation, and the need for continuous adaptation to remain relevant and resilient in a rapidly evolving world. In the future, it is imperative to consider how al-Hadi's vision of harmonising modernity with tradition can guide us in constructing a future where progress and respect for cultural heritage are seamlessly integrated.

Inspirations from the Visionary Leadership of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi

Thus, Al-Hadi's historical perspective offers a framework for navigating modern challenges, emphasising the importance of adapting to political realities while steadfastly maintaining religious commitments.

Conclusion

Ultimately, through his writings and publications, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi played a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of the Malay-Muslim community toward progress and modernity. His efforts contributed to the emergence of a new Malay-Muslim identity—one that embraces modern, global and scientific perspectives while remaining firmly rooted in Islamic values.

Despite facing significant backlash for his progressive views, Syed Sheikh al-Hadi's vision was remarkably forward-thinking. While there is little evidence that explicitly demonstrates the influence of Syed Sheikh Hadi in the Malay-Muslim community today, the positive developments captured in this paper suggest the lasting impact of his ideals and a sustained tradition of Muslim reform in the region. His foresight and leadership in championing these ideas have shaped the community's evolution, aligning closely with the values and practices observed in contemporary Singapore.

Al-Hadi's legacy reminds us of the importance of intellectual inquiry, cultural preservation, and the need for continuous adaptation to remain relevant and resilient in a rapidly evolving world. In the future, it is imperative to consider how al-Hadi's vision of harmonising modernity with tradition can guide us in constructing a future where progress and respect for cultural heritage are seamlessly integrated.

References

Abu Bakar, I. (1994). Islamic modernism in Malaya: The life and thought of Sayid Syekh Al-Hadi 1867-1934. University of Malaya Press.

Akgun, T., & Zakariya, H. (2019). Syed Sheikh al-Hadi's views on the educational reforms in Malaya. *Journal of Malay Studies*, 2(1), 33-50.

Al-Hady, S. A. (1999). The real cry of Syed Shaykh al-Hady. Malaysian Sociological Research Institute.

Isahak, N. N., & Abdul Rahim, A. (2020). The response of Syed Sheikh al-Hadi (1867-1934) to educational concerns of the Malays in Malaya. *International Journal of Islamic Thought*, 7, 29-38.

Madrasah Alumni. (n.d.). SG Madrasah Alumni - Career & Education. <https://madrasahalumni.websheets.pro/>

Ministry of Social and Family Development. (2022). White Paper on Singapore Women's Development. https://www.msf.gov.sg/docs/default-source/celebrating-sg-women-document/white-paper-on-singapore-womens-development.pdf?sfvrsn=708177eb_3

Obor Ummah: Jejak Tokoh Agama Islam di Singapura, (2011). Persatuan Ulama dan Guru-Guru Agama Islam Singapura (PERGAS) and Lembaga Biasiswa Kenangan Maulud (LBKM)

The Straits Times. (2017, September 12). Halimah Yacob set to be Singapore's first female president: A timeline of her career. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/halimah-yacob-set-to-be-singapores-first-female-president-a-timeline-of-her-career>

The Straits Times. (2024, January 4). Madrasah student hopes to study law in a local university. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/madrasah-student-hopes-to-study-law-in-a-local-university>

The Straits Times. (2024, September 20). Malay/Muslim community can be proud of its progress, achievements: SM Lee. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/malaymuslim-community-can-be-proud-of-its-progress-achievements-sm-lee>

References

The Straits Times. (2016, March 21). NUS medical school takes in first former madrasah students. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/education/nus-medical-school-takes-in-first-former-madrasah-students>

The Straits Times. (2020, June 18). First woman appointed head of interfaith hub Harmony Centre. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/first-woman-appointed-head-of-interfaith-hub-harmony-centre>

The Straits Times. (2020, July 27). Syariah Court to have its first woman senior president from Oct 1. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/syariah-court-to-have-its-first-woman-senior-president-from-oct-1>

Nazirudin, M. N. (2022). The Singapore Muslim community experience towards a community of success. RPCS Quarterly. Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (MUIS). https://www.muis.gov.sg/-/media/Files/OOM/RPCS/Quarterly/RPCS-Quarterly_ICCOS.ashx

Zulkifli, M. (2023, March 6). Committee of Supply Debates 2023 speech by Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs, Minister for Social and Family Development, Second Minister for Health Masagos Zulkifli. <https://www.m3.gov.sg/media-centre/speeches-and-press-releases/cos-2023-speech-1/>

About Author

Haninah Rehan is a recipient of the 2023 Syed Isa Semait Scholarship, which aims to cultivate future leaders in the religious sector from among Madrasah graduates. She is currently studying the Arabic language and literature at the University of Jordan. As part of the development programs offered to scholars, which include work attachments at various departments within the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore, Haninah completed the RPCS internship program, which was held from July to September 2024.

The RPCS internship programme provides undergraduate budding researchers with a 3-month opportunity to hone their research and writing skills under the guidance and supervision of the core research team. From 2023--2025, interns will contribute to the RPCS Islamic Intellectual Heritage Project, **examining** the written works of the past asatizah to **explore their contributions** to governance, society (social cohesion and family), and science and technology. Additionally, interns are encouraged to produce a commentary on a scholar(s) of their choice as part of their internship deliverables.

About RPCS

The Research Programme in the Study of Muslim Communities of Success (RPCS) is developed as part of Muis' efforts in advancing religious thought leadership for the future. The programme seeks to develop contextualised bodies of knowledge on socio-religious issues that are typical for Muslim communities living in secular states and advanced economies. The RPCS focus will be on developing new understanding, interpretations and application of Islamic principles, values and traditions to contemporary issues and challenges.

Unless specifically stated otherwise, the author's opinions in this piece do not necessarily reflect RPCS' official position. This commentary's publishing copyright is owned by RPCS. Without RPCS' consent, no portion of this article may be duplicated, saved in a retrieval system, or transmitted electronically or otherwise. These commentaries may not be reproduced without prior permission from RPCS and due credit to the author(s) and RPCS. Please email to Editor RPCS Insights and Perspectives at RPCS@muis.gov.sg.