

# MESSAGE FROM CHAIRMAN



As we approach Singapore's 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence next year, it would be timely for us to assess the progress that we as a nation have made over the past five decades. We ought to be proud of how much Singapore has achieved, given that we are a city state with no hinterland or other natural resources. We have transformed ourselves from a third world country to a first world one that is envied by nations around the world.

As a community, is this sense of pride that we feel over our nation's successes also felt when we look at our own achievements over the last 50 years? Certainly. We have undoubtedly made significant progress. But is this progress enough? This is the true question that needs to be answered.

While we may be happy with how much we have grown as a community, we should not and must not rest on our laurels. Our pioneer generation has worked hard to get us to where we are today. It is now our turn to continue with this journey to ensure that our future generation will have a better and brighter future. This was one of the driving forces behind the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Convention of Singapore Muslim Professionals that AMP organised two years ago. We wanted to continue the legacy of our founders who wanted the community to have a better future and they did that by starting a movement of professionals who brainstormed new strategies to advance the community's interests.

Today AMP remains committed to this objective. Every decade it holds the National Convention of Singapore Muslim Professionals, which identifies where the community's interests lie and what strategies should be implemented in order to advance these interests. Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> Convention in 2012, AMP has identified two major areas that the community should focus on, that is, the issue of the community's net worth and its academic progress.

Consequently, the Debt Advisory Centre (DAC) was set up last year to address the community's debt issues, and our research arm, the Centre for Research on Islamic and Malay Affairs (RIMA) is currently conducting research on the relationship between debt and the community's overall net worth. Hitherto, we have served 580 clients from April 2013 to March 2014, almost six times more than we had anticipated when we started this programme. Could this be only the tip of the iceberg? Could this also be an early indication that our community is in

deficit? These are pertinent questions which need answers, and more importantly, solutions and actions. AMP is resolved to take the lead to tackle this for the community and nation. Though it may have been rather slow during the initial phase, we are happy to share that the response to our efforts in establishing partnerships with various government agencies and other bodies to tackle this problem has been very encouraging. There is now heightened awareness of this issue. We aim to continue this endeavour of ours.

Similarly, AMP will continue in our effort to boost the academic performance of our students. Though I am heartened by the government's recent announcement on the opening up of pathways for non-university graduates as recommended by the ASPIRE committee, there are still lingering concerns. Official statistics from the last Census of Population in 2010 revealed the below average representation of university graduates in our community (5.1%) as compared to the national average of 22.8%. It is my belief that there is a direct correlation between the attainment of university degree (or equivalent) to the attainment of managerial functions and other senior positions in the PMET group. Likewise, we too are under-represented in this group. Against this backdrop, we must continue to work to increase the number of university graduates. There is certainly much room for improvement.

In light of this, AMP has chosen to focus our efforts this year and the next on addressing education issues. We have formed the AMP Committee on Education (ACE) to bring to life the recommendations of the Convention on education. This committee, which comprises education and social development practitioners and experts, will look into the different ways that our students can strive for higher academic achievements vis-à-vis the existing education landscape.

As a movement of professionals, AMP often taps on the expertise of other professionals and together, we strive towards advancing the community's interests, as we have done for ACE. It is this practice of involving like-minded individuals and organisations that has contributed to AMP's successes over the years. The *gotong royong* spirit is something that our community is well-acquainted with and it is my hope that it continues to burn deep within us. Only when we each play our part in the community can we, as a community, hope to advance our interests and scale greater heights together.

As we enter Singapore's 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence, I am cautiously optimistic about what is in store for us as a community and nation. We have enjoyed much success and progress in the last five decades, but many challenges remain ahead of us. However, I believe together, we can overcome these challenges. AMP remains committed to its role as a partner of the community and will continue its efforts to offer thought leadership and mobilise resources in resolving the community's issues as we navigate through the next 50 years and beyond.

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