

**SPEECH BY MR ZHULKARNAIN ABDUL RAHIM, CHAIRMAN OF AMP GROUP, AT THE COMMUNITY IN REVIEW 2019 SEMINAR ON SATURDAY 16 MARCH 2019 AT 9.15 AM AT SUNTEC SINGAPORE CONVENTION & EXHIBITION CENTRE**

Mr Amrin Amin, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health,

Esteemed speakers

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen.

Good morning.

1. I would like to warmly welcome you to the Community in Review 2019 Seminar.
2. Held annually by AMP and its research subsidiary, RIMA, the Community in Review or CIR discusses issues that are pertinent not only to the Malay/Muslim community, but also the larger Singaporean society.
3. CIR acts as a platform for intellectual discourse and the mutual exchange of ideas so that we all can contribute towards increasing the body of knowledge on such issues, in a collaborative and collective manner.
- 4.

**CREATING AN ECOSYSTEM OF LEARNING AND SHARING OF BEST PRACTICES**

Ladies and Gentlemen

5. This spirit of collaboration and exchange of ideas has always been part of AMP's DNA. In line with this, I am pleased to announce that AMP has recently launched a new initiative called AMPx – "x" standing for exchange. AMPx offers intellectual capacity development of professionals and community leaders.

6. Aligned with the CIR, AMPx aims to serve the community's interest by creating an ecosystem of learning and sharing of best practices. Piloted in January 2018, AMPx focuses on four key areas: idea generation, networking, incubation of community start-ups, and training / capacity building.
7. In the long run, we hope to create an ecosystem of a community of professionals invested in uplifting the community and one another through AMPx.

### **LOOKING AHEAD – AMP 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY & CONVO4TH**

8. More importantly, AMPx will set the groundwork for our upcoming Fourth National Convention of Singapore Muslim Professionals slated to be held in three years' time – in 2022.
9. The Convention is a forward-planning exercise held every 10 years that aims to provide a platform for Muslim professionals in Singapore to convene and discuss issues facing the Malay/Muslim community in the next decade.
10. Titled Convo4th, the Convention will adopt a fresh approach to brainstorming and proposing strategies for the community. Instead of addressing issues within conventional disciplines as in previous conventions, it shall be targeted at different segments of the community such as families, elderly, youth, workers, businesses or the vulnerable segments of our society.
11. Come AMP's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2021, we will be launching a series of CIR seminars where each panel will present their strategies throughout the year.
12. Today, the CIR will focus on one of the segments which will also be highlighted in Convo4th – the community of drug offenders.

## **ADDRESSING THE DRUG MENACE**

13. The choice to focus on the drug situation and its surrounding issues in Singapore as the theme for this year's seminar stems from a number of developments.
14. The Central Narcotics Bureau, CNB, recently reported new, and worrying, trends. Among those trends is the surge in number of abusers of new psychoactive substances. The production and trafficking of drugs such as methamphetamine are found to have reached 'alarming levels' as markets for such drugs evolve. The recent National Council Against Drugs Abuse, or NCADA, Youth Perception Survey released in 2017 also reported that more young people now have liberal attitudes towards drugs.
15. New types of drugs have emerged over the course of the last 50 years; and along with it, the profiles of abusers have also changed. Where before we tend to see more drug abusers coming from the lower stratifications of society, today, more of the wealthy and the better-educated have joined their ranks. What is more problematic is when trends change in ways that forebode a longstanding problem. For instance, the liberal attitudes towards drugs amongst the youth and increase in the number of young offenders, is a concern as they are our future generation that will uphold the pillars of our society, ensuring its strength and continuity.
16. These recent developments also pose a number of questions:
  - a. Are preventive measures and education keeping pace with the new realities in the drug landscape?
  - b. What is the effectiveness, perhaps even the relevance, of current rehabilitation and reintegration approaches?
  - c. What is the state of affairs surrounding our youth that tips some of them towards drug abuse, in spite of the presence of strong deterrents and education over the decades? Are they feeling disenfranchised or disempowered by the state of global economics?

17. I stress here that drug abuse is a menace that can potentially plague every segment of our society and stain our social fabric in the future. This common enemy makes no distinction between the colour of our skin or the language that we speak. A teenage boy dwelling in a rental flat is no more susceptible to the threat of drugs than an undergraduate exposed to liberal attitudes towards drugs in an overseas exchange program. The fallout from drug abuse is not just limited to the individuals, but more often than not, the families and their children suffer too as victims equally, if not more.
18. These adverse impacts and factors underpinning the drug trends are never static. Therefore, the strategies for addressing the drug situation must also constantly evolve, holistically, from preventive education to reintegration to rehabilitation.
19. In tackling the drug menace, we must also be prepared to look beyond the offender, the relevant agencies, the state and civil society organisations. We have to question age-old assumptions, challenge conventional stereotypes, explore new thinking and approaches; focus on not just the individuals but also involve the families, their children and potential employers, in order to realise the vision of a drug-free Singapore.
20. It is in this spirit that we are focusing on the problem of drugs abuse in this year's seminar.

## **CONCLUSION**

21. Today, we have invited four speakers from diverse backgrounds — both academics and practitioners — to share their thoughts on the theme. We will thus not only have expert views, but the invaluable experiences of those on the ground as well.
22. I thank our Guest of Honour, the sponsors for their support, the RIMA and AMP teams for their hard work in organising the event, the speakers for their sharing but most importantly, I thank all of you here for making AMP history today by your participation.

23. This year's CIR sees almost 200 participants in attendance, a record ever since we started CIR in the year 2000. We are encouraged by this positive response. It shows the joint support from various members of our community in coming together to address the drug problem. I am heartened to note that AMP's renewed approach towards collaboration with all segments of the community has been well received. I look forward to the mutual exchange of ideas and future collaboration.

24. I hope we will all have a fruitful and engaging session today.

25. Thank you.

**END**