MEDIA RELEASE

AMP Convention to Explore Strengthening the Muslim Family Institution through Healthy Communication on Sexuality and Technology Use

1. According to research done by the Family Panel of the AMP 4th National Convention, Muslim parents avoid talking about sexuality to their children because of the fear of normalising ideas of sexuality that may run contrary to their Islamic values. The research by the Family Panel showed that 89 percent of parents are not equipped with enough knowledge and skills to effectively communicate the topic of sexuality with their children. Majority (87 percent) of respondents said that as it is a topic that is considered taboo in the community, conversations surrounding sexuality are atypical in the Muslim community's safe spaces, which include homes, mosques, and institutions. This has resulted in a lack of non-judgemental spaces to discuss the issue openly.

2. However, digitalisation has made access to information on sex and sexuality within close reach of our youth and children. This has necessitated honest and frank discussions on sexuality, especially within families, in order to help our children and youths navigate the issue. In line with this, the AMP 4th National Convention will discuss the importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between members of the family institution.

3. The Family Panel will also discuss the role of digitalisation in strengthening families and the challenges it presents to the family unit. One of the key challenges is how communication in families has shifted from face-to-face interaction to non-verbal communication, causing ramifications on parent-child relationships. The prevalent use of technology has also led to greater exposure to inappropriate and unsuitable content for children. Another challenge is the effects of excessive screen time on children due to the heavy reliance on technology that could lead to withdrawal effects in the form of emotional outbursts upon the removal of digital devices.

4. In order to explore how the Muslim community can strengthen the family institution, the Family Panel of the AMP 4th National Convention will discuss: 1) the importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between members of the family institution and 2) the impact of digital devices on family values and relationships. Details of the Panel's key findings can be found in the Annex.

5. To kickstart the discussion, the Family Panel invites members of the public to join in the forum online at convo4.sg/family. They can also visit the Convention social media channels on Instagram and Facebook: **instagram.com/convo_4** and **facebook.com/convo4.sg** for more information.

6. **The AMP 4th National Convention will be held on Saturday 15 October 2022 at 8.30am at MAX Atria at the Singapore EXPO (1 Expo Drive, Level 2). To register for the Convention, members of the public can visit convo4.sg. Registration closes on 14 October 2022.**

7. AMP Singapore organises a national convention every decade and dedicates it as a platform for local Muslim professionals to discuss new strategies that can propel the Muslim community in Singapore towards greater success. Each convention has resulted in significant solutions that have been critical to the development of the Singapore Muslim community, including the formation of AMP in 1991, a year after the first Convention was held. As a platform, the Convention offers opportunities for critical discourse on issues relevant to the community, which is reflective of AMP's consultative and collaborative approach. The 1st Convention was held in 1990; the 2nd Convention was held in 2000, while the 3rd Convention was held in 2012. The 4th Convention will differ from previous Conventions as it will adopt a human-centred design thinking approach for the first time ever. Through this approach, the Convention will look at issues from the perspective of four personas pertinent to the long-term development of the community, namely youths, community advocates, families and seniors. Panels looking into these personas have been established, comprising professionals from different backgrounds to lend their expertise in identifying issues that concern these personas and to facilitate the ideation process for strategies and solutions to these issues.

END

KEY FINDINGS & ISSUES FROM FAMILY PANEL RESEARCH

Methodology

The Panel adopted multi-method approach, which comprised:

1. Focus group discussions with 9 case officers in the social service sector
2. Ground-sensing interviews with key stakeholders
3. Online perception survey
   - 133 respondents, of whom 60% were parents

Key Findings

1) **Issues on the importance of healthy communication on sexuality education between members of the family institution**

   Sexuality as a Fear-Inducing Topic
   - Respondents highlighted the infrequent discussions about sex education between parents and children due to fear of normalising ideas of sexuality that challenge traditional concepts of marriage, family, and gender.

   Sexuality Education as Firmly Rooted in Religious Values
   - As a taboo topic, discussions, and conversations surrounding sexuality are atypical in our safe spaces – homes, mosques, and institutions. Due to the lack of safe spaces, respondents strongly call for the formation of such spaces guided by religious values to encourage deeper conversations on sexuality, keeping them mentally and physically healthy.

   Sexuality as a Discourse is Complex
   - One respondent stated how Muslim organisations may have different approaches in dealing with issues of sexuality giving the impression of a lack of uniformity. This may make it difficult for Muslim organisations to consolidate efforts toward the advocacy of certain issues.
   - Given that issues of gender and sexuality can be highly convoluted, respondents expressed the need to streamline efforts such that the Muslim community is reaffirmed of the current leadership.

   Role of Parents in Sexuality Education
   - According to respondents, while parents want to be more involved in the topic with children, they also lack the expertise and knowledge to discuss it objectively, necessitating parenting workshops on sexuality that can provide transformative changes in the long run.

2) Issues on the impact of digital devices on familial values and relationships

Impact of Technological Disruption

- Youths who are early adopters of technology resort to digital devices and the Internet for communication and information. Respondents agree that this significantly shifts communication from face-to-face interaction to non-verbal communication, causing ramifications on parent-child relationships.

Technology as a bridging activity

- Respondents proposed for parents to mediate technological usage by switching between different modes of sensory tech stimulation (i.e. visual to auditory) or opt for 'offline' activities such as books to redirect them back to a sense of normalcy.
- Weighing on the developmental dimension of technological use, participants express that parents can supervise their children by participating in the activity.

Facilitating Technological Awareness

- As perceived by respondents, the prevalent use of technology leads to greater exposure to inappropriate and unsuitable content for children. One of them highlighted the need for programmes in school to promote technological awareness and a value-based approach to enhance ethics in technology use in order for children to discern information better and navigate technology independently.

Role of Parents in Supervising Technological Usage

- It is also found that parents use technology as an alternative form of education and entertainment. However, the heavy reliance on technology by children brings about the issue of excessive screen time that could lead to withdrawal effects. Respondents proposed close supervision and regulation of technological usage amongst their children. At the same time, according to respondents, parents are also advised to tap into social support and adopt traditional parenting styles instead of relying on convenient solutions like gadgets.