

# CENDEKIAWAN LESTARI SERIES (Inaugural Launch)

## “Malays in the National Imagination: A Struggle of Our Identity”

Date : 30 October 2020

Guest-of-Honour : Mdm Rahayu Mahzam  
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health  
Advisor, Malay Heritage Foundation

Time : 7.30 pm

Moderator : Dr Azhar Ibrahim

The session will be streamed 'live' through Facebook/Warisan SG. Register at: <https://tinyurl.com/CendekiawanLaunch>

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## Synopsis

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In this talk, we will examine some of the challenges facing the Malay/Muslim community in Singapore in defining their identity. A historical approach will be taken to examine how perceptions about the community evolved over time and what were the responses by the leaders of the community. An analysis of the current state of affairs of the community will be presented. And in doing so some options for the community will be presented for discussion. There will be a focus on the younger members of the community and how they see themselves vis-à-vis the wider community. The issue of identity is then presented not as a binary with either or option but rather as a continuum where increasing diversity will inevitably exert pressures for an acceptance of a more varied definition of who we are.

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## About the Guest Speaker: PROF YAACOB IBRAHIM

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Prof Yaacob Ibrahim is currently a professor of engineering at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) where he is also Advisor to the President of SIT.

He started as a Member of Parliament on 2 January 1997 till his retirement after the 2020 General Elections. He served as a Minister in the Ministries of Communications and Information (2011 – 2018), Environment and Water Resources (2004 – 2011) and Community Development and Sports (2002 – 2004) while being Minister-in-charge of Muslim Affairs.

He graduated from the University of Singapore with a degree in Civil Engineering in 1980. He worked as a structural engineer from 1980 to 1984 and then pursued his Ph.D at Stanford University graduating in 1989. After two years as a post-doctoral fellow at Cornell University, he joined the National University of Singapore as a faculty member in 1990 where he became a tenured member. He took a leave of absence from NUS from July 1998 till his resignation from NUS in August 2018.

He is currently advising several start-ups and sits on several boards of private companies and unions.

The inaugural launch of the Cendekiawan Lestari Series is held in conjunction with



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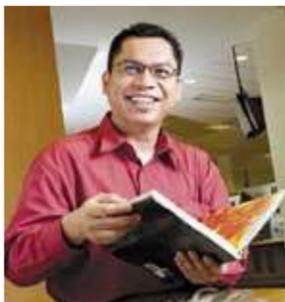
# About the Cendekiawan Lestari Series (CLS)

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## Overview

The Cendekiawan Lestari Series (CLS) is one of our new initiatives to provide a discursive platform where the contributions and ideas of prominent figures and key Malay thinkers in contemporary Singapore, share and pass on their knowledge to the present and future generation.

CLS pays tribute to the cultural and intellectual tradition that has been one of the hallmarks of the Malay community in Singapore. Since the later part of the 19th century, Kampong Gelam has been the centre of intellectual and cultural activity not only for Singapore, but the Malay world. The growth of the printing and publication industry, as well as the book trade, brought many journalists, writers, artists and thought leaders to our shores, to discuss, share and exchange ideas on social, economic and political developments around them; and how these can lead to the betterment of the community. Singapore became fertile ground for prolific individuals such as Eunus Abdullah, A Rahim Kajai, Yusof Ishak, A Samad Ismail, Tongkat Waran (Usman Awang), Kamaludin Hadi (Keris Mas), Harun Aminurrashid, P. Ramlee, Zubir Said, Za'aba and many more. They helped to plant the seeds of modernity and change for the local populace.



Today, our community has nurtured many prominent intellectuals and thought leaders in diverse fields of expertise. They have arisen out of Singapore's unique circumstances where the Malays are the minority community competing under a meritocratic system. They have developed their own expertise, accumulated a wealth of experience and insights that would be useful reference points for present and future generations. There is also a need to acknowledge, put on record and appreciate the huge reservoir of knowledge that is contained within these personalities. Unfortunately, research and documentation on their efforts and contribution are still too few and far in between. The CLS aspires to bridge this knowledge gap so as to build our thought leadership and nurture future talents, ambassadors and advocates for our culture and heritage.

## Objectives: -

- a) To recognise and appreciate leading Malay intellectuals and intelligentsias in contemporary Singapore, promote critical thinking, cultivate culture of learning and safeguard our local intellectual tradition;
- b) To give prominence to our thought leadership and enhance our cultural and intellectual capital; and
- c) To engage key stakeholders and community members, both young and old, in the arts, cultural and heritage sectors as well as those in the institutes of higher learning (IHLs).

## Your Contribution is **DOUBLED**. Support Us and Make a Difference Today!

Such programmes help to build confidence, root our national identity and foster stronger social cohesion among members of our community. This work is huge and requires continuous effort in order to reap the benefits over the long term. And, we cannot do it alone. We need you to support such efforts.

Your gift and contribution will enable us to continue our work of nurturing social compact and solidarity, over the long term. In addition to promoting and safeguarding our shared heritage for all, such programmes also help to inspire the next generation of ambassadors for a more long-term stewardship for our culture and heritage.

With a gift to MHF, you will be joining an illustrious community of individuals and organisations who believe passionately in the power of culture and heritage to connect and bond us as a community. Together, we can make a difference.

Your gift to MHF is eligible for the government's Cultural Matching Fund which matches your gift on a one-to-one basis. In addition, as MHF is a non-profit organisation and a registered Charity that has been accorded the Institution of Public Character (IPC) status since May 2006, you will also be entitled to tax exemption of up to 2.5% for your generous donation. Visit [giving.sg/The Malay Heritage Foundation](http://giving.sg/The Malay Heritage Foundation) to make your contributions. For more information, you can also email us at [secretariat@mhf.org.sg](mailto:secretariat@mhf.org.sg).

Other Guest Speakers in the series (Jan – Oct 2021)  
(clockwise): Prof Syed Farid Alatas, Prof Hadijah Rahmat,  
Dr Fatris Bakaram, Dr Aidil Subhan and Dr Noor Aisha