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SPEECH BY INCHE RAHIM ISPAK, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF TELOK KURAU SECONDARY SCHOOL ON 19TH JULY. 1965 AT 7.30 P.M.

We are gathered this evening to witness the official opening of another new school - the 55th to be built by the F.A.P. Government. As you all know this is one of several new schools that have been built in this area and we can look forward to attending many more gatherings connected with the school in this area in the future.

In line with our Government policy of integrating pupils of the various streams of education, the Telok Kurau Secondary School is yet another integrated Malay/English secondary school, and because this area has a comparatively large Malay-medium school-going population, this school has a larger number of Malay-medium secondary classes compared to the English-medium classes. Whatever the proportion of classes between the two streams, the students from both enjoy all the facilities that have been made available in the school just as in the other integrated school.

In Singapore the medium of education depends on the free choice of the parents and the children receive their education in the medium that their parents have chosen for them. Whatever the medium of instruction may be, they follow common syllabuses and they enjoy the same facilities and privileges, and it is hoped that in schools such as this, children from different streams would be able to learn, work and play together, understand one another better, and become more tolerant towards each other.

Therefore, while the children study their lessons in different media in the classroom, they mix and get together as much as possible outside the classroom, on the field, in the hall, and in the various extra-curricula activities which are amply provided for in this school, so that these early beginnings will forge the strong foundation for the building up of a united and prosperous Malaysia. Integration naturally cannot be achieved in 3 or 4 or 5 years. It will take a generation or more. But a start has to be made and we have made a good start.

The Singapore Government, as you all know, gives special privileges to Malays in the field of education. Malay children receive free education not only in the primary but also in the secondary, pre-University, Singapore Vocational Institute, Polytechnic and the Universities of Singapore and Malaya. Over and above these, Malay students in the Polytechnic and in the two Universities mentioned are awarded bursaries based purely on their financial circumstances. And in almost every case they are given top bursaries because they are financially poor. In the award of these bursaries Malays do not compete with non-Malays. These bursaries are in addition to free tuition fees in the Universities.

But in the States of Malaya Malays are not extended facilities in the way the Singapore Government has done. In this connection I welcome the call by the Kampong Makam Branch of UMNO in Penang which appeared in the Straits Times a week ago. I must congratulate the leaders of UMNO in that Branch for having taken up the issue for free secondary education for Malays. As a matter of fact the leaders of UMNO should call for free education for Malays not only in the secondary schools but also in other higher institutions of learning. It seems to me that the Federal Minister for Education, Inche Mohd. Khir Johari, or even the Secretary-General of UMNO, Dato Syed Jaffar Albar, have failed to take up this problem for the Malays. They should do more for the Malay education in the rural areas.

The concept of a Malaysian Malaysia demands tolerance, patience and understanding in the approach to our educational problems. The national approach to our educational problems must necessarily be the chief instrument through which unity of various races and cultural groups can be forged. We must all remember that the need now is a common loyalty to Malaysia, and no longer to Malaya, Singapore, Sabah or Sarawak. Malaysian nationalism is something new to all the constituent States and their peoples. Therefore, Malaysian national identity is in this sense a new identity. This means that all of us regardless of whether we are Malays, Chinese, Indians, Kadazans, Ibans, Eurasians etc. have to become Malaysians, something we all were not, prior to September, 1963.

The national approach to our educational problems in Malaysia must in this transitional period take into account the factor of the special circumstances experienced in each of the constituent states. For example in the matter of the education system, the Singapore and Central Governments and even the Governments in Sabah and Sarawak are not pursuing different objectives. On the contrary we are moving towards the same objective and the same goal of Malaysian nationalism and Malaysian inter-racial unity based upon a sense of belonging to Malaysia and not to China, India or anywhere else. Rather we are travelling via different roads and therefore it might take different period of time to reach our common national objective in education. This is not altogether an extraordinary situation if we consider the diversity of languages and cultures, a situation not of our own creation but one which we inherited from colonialism.

I understand the Principal and teachers of the school have worked hard and have done much spade work to launch it from scratch as it were. And as though these were not enough, there is the problem of shady characters operating in the vicinity of the school, something which I know parents are gravely concerned about. However, the Siglap Citizens Consultative Committee and I have drawn the attention of the authorities to this social evil and as you might have read action is being taken against these unsocial elements in our midst.

I must congratulate Tuan Syed Ahmad Alwi Alsree, his Senior Assistants and Staff for carrying out their duties so efficiently since the school started early this year. To be fair, I must also thank the non-teaching staff of the school for the work they have done.

With those words I have pleasure to declare the school open.