

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR TEH CHEANG WAN, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AT THE GEYLANG WEST HARI RAYA HAJI VARIETY SHOW AT BLOCK 43 BASKETBALL COURT ON SUNDAY, 17 OCTOBER 1982 AT 7.30 PM

It gives me great pleasure to spend this evening with you, enjoying the Geylang West Hari Raya Haji Variety Show.

In our multi-racial, multi-cultural society, major festivals of every ethnic and religious group have traditionally been knowledged and accepted by the other groups. Today, the significance of these festivals are increasingly appreciated and understood by everyone, and it is not surprising that various ethnic groups have began to celebrate and observe each other's festivals. This is a trend which I welcome and would like to see strengthened. It is only through a fusion of all cultures that a Singaporean culture and identity could be forged.

Tonight I am particularly happy to be able to present a cheque for \$5,000 to MENDAKI. I understand that the funds will be used to further the objectives of MENDAKI, namely to promote the education of Muslims at all levels from pre-primary to tertiary. This cheque is a token of the support of Geylang West Constituency to MENDAKI.

The Chinese saying "工欲善其事，必先利其器" literally means that if we want to do a good job, we must have a good tool. Taken in its broader sense, the saying urges people to acquire skills to perform their jobs well. It has been repeatedly emphasized that owing to a lack of natural resources, Singapore's most valuable asset is its 2.4 million people. The Government has invested, and will continue to invest, enormous sums of money on education and skills training in order to produce a literate, disciplined and skilled populace. MENDAKI is a laudable project as it complements the Government's education

programme. The Government's education policy, however, is not to make every student a university graduate. This is an unrealistic, indeed, an impossible goal to achieve! Never in the history of mankind has there been a country endowed with an entire population of academically inclined individuals, all of whom have attained tertiary education. And there never will be. We must recognise this fact of life and set our goals accordingly.

The objective of our education and training programme is to provide every citizen the opportunity to develop and acquire the skills he is capable of. The academically inclined who will proceed to tertiary education will always constitute a minority. But that does not mean that the majority who are non-graduates will not do well in life. In Singapore, everyone has an equal opportunity to acquire a skill. Owing to the economic progress attained during the last 20 years, anyone who has acquired a skill is assured of a satisfactory job and good remuneration. For example, a skilled construction worker from Korea working here in Singapore earns \$60 a day or \$1,500 to \$2,000 per month. In the other building trades, workers who are prepared to acquire the necessary skills, get equally good pay once they have mastered the skills. Thus, all concrete truck drivers employed by the Resources Development Corporation Pte Ltd (RDC) - a Government-owned company - earn more than \$1,000 per month. Those who are prepared to work overtime make as much as \$1,800. The point I wish to make is simply this: everyone has the ability to acquire at least one skill if he is determined enough.

On this note, allow me to close my speech by wishing you an enjoyable evening ahead.
