

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR TANG GUAN SENG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION), ON THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF QIAONAN PRIMARY
SCHOOL ON FRIDAY, 3 OCTOBER 1986 AT 6.00 PM

Good evening, Principal, Teachers and Pupils of Qiaonan Primary. I am honoured to be here at the opening of your new school building. A new school building signifies a new milestone in your school life. And for you, being here is a considerable change from what you had more than 50 years ago.

It had never been easy building new schools in the past. It was only through the generosity of the more successful businessmen that pupils of 50 years ago were able to study in proper school buildings. For these businessmen, raising funds for the new school was the biggest hurdle. They were, however, not deterred by the obstacles for they were motivated by the vision of helping the young attain their goals and ambitions. They had realised the value and importance of good education. And so, they considered it an honour to be able to contribute to the education of our children by providing at least a building in which they could learn and be taught.

Today, however, the scenario has changed. The task of building new schools is now mainly taken over by the Government. In the face of increasing construction costs, this is a godsend. The design and layout of these schools are of a standard unheard of in the past. Playing fields, games courts, libraries, special rooms, laboratories are all standard features of our new schools. These sophisticated and modern educational aids and facilities are not to amaze and impress our visitors but to provide a conducive environment for learning.

It is unfortunate that quite a number of our parents do not realise the extent to which our schools have been equipped with up-to-date teaching-learning facilities. This is probably because they have too busy a schedule and, therefore, cannot attend school functions or they have not been given an opportunity to visit their children's schools and see for themselves how well their children's needs are catered for.

I would like to suggest that schools incorporate 'open-house' activities into their special programmes so that parents are able to get a first-hand view of the work the principal and teachers are doing to nurture and train young minds. Let them also see the complementary infrastructural support: the Science Laboratories, Language Laboratory, Library, AVA rooms, Resource rooms, the spacious Hall and the airy classrooms.

But is the quality of education measured only by physical standard? Of course not. The human element must be the most important contributing factor to quality education. I am referring to the principal's and teachers' roles. Dedicated teachers led by a capable principal who, in turn, is assisted by resourceful senior staff make a powerful combination. That is why in recent years, the trainees of Institute of Education have to be very selective. It is also why the Ministry has introduced Educational Administration Courses to groom suitable school administrators to manage the schools.

The Principal, being the helmsman, must know in which direction his school is going; he must also be well acquainted with the strengths and weaknesses of his teachers and pupils. He must be familiar with the instructional programmes that have been drawn up for his pupils. Only then can he set the tone for the school and effectively guide his teachers and pupils.

Our teachers' dedication and commitment are not the only influencing factors of our pupils' attitude towards learning and the pursuit of knowledge. Parental support is equally important. Parents can rest assured that with excellent physical facilities and a strong teaching staff their children are in good hands. But they are not enough. Parents can help too. You can provide the necessary home support so that your children can concentrate on their studies and put in their best to realize their potential.

Education is the nurturing of young minds and lives. It succeeds when there is support between teachers and pupils, and, between parents and teachers. I have no doubt that the principal and teachers of Qiaonan will do their utmost to maintain the strong ties with their pupils and their pupils' parents.

Ahead of you lies a promising and exciting future. I am confident that all of you, the pupils, teachers and principal of the school will face it squarely and take on the challenges with courage.

It leaves me now to wish you all the best in your endeavours, and, to declare Qiaonan Primary School officially open.

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