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SPEECH BY MR CHAI CHONG YII, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF HWA CHONG JUNIOR COLLEGE AND THE LAYING OF THE FOUNDATION STONE OF THE EXTENSION OF CHINESE HIGH SCHOOL ON SAT 30/8/75 AT 1630 HRS

I am pleased to be present at this auspicious occasion - the official opening of the Hwa Chong Junior College and the laying of the foundation stone of the extension of Chinese High School. This occasion must surely be of very special significance to both institutions.

2 The education of our youth is the responsibility of every citizen. Chinese High School is one of the few schools with a long history and a large enrolment and has been playing an important part in the education in Singapore. In recent years, many expansion schemes have been implemented; modern and well-equipped premises were put up. The concerted efforts and the dynamism of the School Management Committee are worthy of our praise and congratulations.

3 Moreover, it is heartening to note that those who are deeply concerned with the education and welfare of our young people have responded positively to the Government's call to build more junior colleges so that 'A' level pupils will be able to study in a more conducive environment and to develop their latent talents and cultivate socially desirable attitudes and qualities. The opening of Hwa Chong Junior College is the culmination of many years of hard work. It is the first junior college to be established through the efforts of our people and it has earned a niche in the history of education in Singapore. It is hoped that the philanthropic gestures which have made this possible will continue and that other organisations and individuals may well be prompted by this achievement to participate in similar ventures.

4 As in every endeavour, the college encountered early teething problems. Construction work had not yet been completed when the college first opened its doors to admit students. The college had to conduct its lessons in buildings belonging to other institutions. When the time came for the big move into the actual premises, everyone - the principal, staff and students alike - pitched in to move the furniture, clean the building including the toilets, arrange the desks and chairs, plant the trees and beautify the gardens. You created some of the finest examples of hard work and self-discipline. Your performance puts to shame the selfish and self-centred attitudes which many youths of today have. You have illustrated the wealth that can be reaped through co-operation and caring, one for the other. What we achieve through the sweat of the brow can be as meaningful as what we can achieve through a knowledge of the written word, for work cannot really be classified into dignified work or undignified work.

5 The dignity of labour must not be lost in our affluent society with its accompanying material comforts. There are many among our young today who were born with a silver spoon in their mouths. If they should grow up believing only in the pursuit of pleasure, then our nation will suffer. No one should exploit the fruits of another's labour. Thus we must help our youths in schools and colleges to have a clear understanding of the relation between labour and national progress and to cultivate proper work ethics. A more satisfying life can be lived when a proper attitude towards work is developed.

6 Finally, allow me to express my sincere hope that these imposing buildings and modern facilities amid these beautiful surroundings will inspire you towards developing precious skills and knowledge and a set of values that will stand our nation in very good stead.