

TO BE EMPARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

SPEECH BY TUAN HJ SHA'ARI TADIN, SR PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE AT THE
TENTH JAPANESE LANGUAGE GRADUATION CEREMONY ON
SUNDAY, 21.12.75, AT 2.00 PM AT HILTON HOTEL

Although man has invented an astonishing array of devices to communicate with one another across vast expanse of land and sea, he has still to devise a language which is acceptable for use successfully among the diverse nations of the world. Back in 1887, a certain Russian scholar by the name of Dr L Zamenhof designed an artificial language called Esperanto intended for universal use. Esperanto contains some over two thousand root words and its vocabulary, as far as was found practicable, consists of words common to every important European language, spelled more or less phonetically. Somehow or rather, this universal language did not find favour and interest in its use has since languished.

However, the diversity of languages found among the nations of the world has enriched the cultural and literary heritage of mankind. But in order to appreciate and to enjoy and understand the culture and the literary works of other nations, one has to know their languages. Reading a translated work, for example, is different and has much less impact than reading one in its original language. The subtleties, the idioms, expressions and the nuances of the language are lost in the process of translation.

As long then as man must communicate with one another either in conferences, and in business or political negotiations and as long as there is no common language, the services of the linguists for purposes of interpretation and translation will always be in demand. Singapore, being a focal point of business and economic activities and emerging as a tourist attraction spot and convention centre, behoves the people to know as many foreign languages as possible.

It is heartening to note that more and more Singaporeans are taking up the learning of foreign languages, and among the most popular of these, is the Japanese language. Japanese investments in Singapore and the number of Japanese tourists passing through are on the increase and those of you who have, in addition to English and the other local languages, a good command of the Japanese language will no doubt find opportunities for employment without much difficulty.

Knowledge of other foreign languages increases one's appreciation and understanding of other people's culture, history and aspirations. It also helps to bridge and cement friendly relations between nations. The Japanese Cultural Society in Singapore, since its inception eleven years ago, has devoted itself to the task of promoting friendship, goodwill and understanding between the people of Singapore and Japan. It has done this in many ways such as holding a cultural festival annually, the learning of the Japanese language, among other activities. In a period of conflict and confrontation in the international community, your efforts are to be commended.

In closing, let me congratulate all those who have succeeded in their language course. It gives me great pleasure now to give away the certificates to those of you who, through hardwork, discipline and perseverance, have completed your Japanese language course for this year.
