

MALAY EDUCATION COUNCIL AND MALAY EDUCATION

The following statement was issued by the Ministry of Education this afternoon:-

The Minister for Education, Mr. Chew Swee Kee, views with concern the attitude adopted by the Malay Education Council towards Malay educational problems which should be solved by friendly discussions in a quiet atmosphere instead of mass rallies which can serve no useful purpose except to work up feelings among people who have not had the time to study the problems carefully.

Mass rallies are not answers to problems which affect the education and future employment prospects of young persons. As far as Malay education is concerned the Government has pursued a policy which has been agreed by the Malay Education Council in 1956 and that policy is to extend the use of the Malay language as a medium of instruction in Malay schools stage by stage - to Primary 4 in 1956, to Primary 5 in 1957, to Primary 6 in 1958 and so on.

The programme has been carried out and, although it has been difficult to recruit teachers of suitable quality, the programme has proceeded according to plan. This year 50 Malay teachers, most of whom have little more than a primary education themselves, have been recruited.

There are also teachers-in-training at the Teachers' Training College who would be able to teach in the lower classes of the Malay secondary schools in 1961 or perhaps to teach Malay in English secondary schools.

There are also 95 other Malay teachers under training at the Training College who will be posted to the Malay primary schools after they have qualified.

The shortage of Malay teachers is mainly due to the fact that the plan put forward by the Malay Education Council insisted on the use of Malay as a medium of instruction in Malay primary schools. The training of teachers must necessarily take time, but it is not proposed to allow full-time teachers to teach part-time in excess of six extra hours per week. This restriction must necessarily stand, otherwise the standard of teaching will fall.

If it is argued that a full-time teacher can take on more than six extra hours per week part-time teaching without affecting his efficiency then either the teacher is not doing a full day's work in his full-time job or Government is not getting return for its money.

It must be accepted that it would not be possible to increase the standard of Malay education unless there is a sufficient number of Malays educated to the highest levels after the establishment of Malay secondary schools. Even in the English education system, which is complete in itself from Primary to University level, there is yet a serious shortage of teachers in English secondary schools. How much more serious it must be in the case of an education system which is not complete.

Government will do its best to provide accommodation for Malay children of the right age who wish to gain admission to Malay schools in the same way as for children of other races into other schools.

Pupils from Darjah 7 (English/Malay) are free to compete for places in English secondary schools, including the Junior Trade School, and they can also apply for admission to evening classes, but it must be understood that Government cannot afford to provide secondary education for everyone who wants it.

The number of places must be limited and must be reserved for those who are best fitted for it.

The preparation of Malay text-books receives the constant attention of the Ministry of Education where there is a Committee on Syllabuses and Text-books that deals with the text-books and syllabuses of the different streams of schools. Any suggestions for improvement of text-books or syllabuses will be gladly received by the Ministry of Education.

The administration of the Malay school system is a matter for the Government and not a matter for the Malay Education Council, and the Minister for Education wishes to reiterate that any irresponsible action in creating an atmosphere which will not be conducive to the well-being of the Malay schools and the Malay education system as a whole can only do harm to the causes of Malay education.

The best hope for the Malays in Singapore must lie in a good education in both the Malay and the English languages and this opinion is shared by no less a person than the Prime Minister of the Federation of Malaya.

The Minister appeals to all sensible Malays in Singapore not to listen to rumours and unfounded allegations.

JUNE 9, 1958.

(Time issued 1500 hours).