

SPEECH BY MR. LIM GUAN HOO, POL. SEC. M.I.D.  
M.P. FOR BUKIT MERAH FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY  
OF BUKIT MERAH SECONDARY SCHOOL AT 7.30 P.M.  
ON 16TH MAY 1969

This year, 1969, marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of Singapore. 1969 also marks the 10th anniversary of the present government. When the present government came into office in 1959 one of its most important plans, was the education of our children. Education was to be universal, schools were to be built very rapidly and teachers to be trained to meet this very urgent need. Today, we have achieved our aim of providing every child with at least 10 years of education from the age of 6. By the end of last year, 520,000 of our children - one quarter of our total population - were in school.

Bukit Merah Secondary School was completed and handed over to the Ministry of Education on 28th December 1967. On 4th January 1968, children in this constituency started to attend the School. Bukit Merah Secondary School is the 101st school built by the present Government. It is a modern school that will meet the needs of our society. If you compare Bukit Merah Secondary School with some of the older secondary schools, you will find that it has many facilities that the older schools do not have. The school has five Science laboratories, three Domestic Science rooms, a T.V. room, and most important of all, facilities for technical education: metal workshops, wood workshop, blacksmith room, building construction room, polishing room, technical drawing room, store rooms and other facilities. Like the other modern secondary schools in our country, this school has been built to meet the changes in our education system. This school will meet the present need to emphasise languages, mathematics, science, domestic science, technical education and physical education. These facilities have been provided at great cost - the buildings cost \$1.1 million and the equipment another \$280,000.

Our community is changing rapidly from dependence on trade alone to an emphasis both on trade and industry: our schools must also change. Bukit Merah Secondary School is a reflection of this changing emphasis. With the increasing tempo of industrialisation, there is an increasing demand for trained operatives, craftsmen and technicians. This can only be met if our young citizens graduate from schools equipped with a technical education and trained in workshop practice.

Bukit Merah Constituency has also changed markedly in these last 10 years. In 1959, Bukit Merah was an 'under-developed' area: a slum area without electricity, water, or public health facilities. There was also a very low population density. The picture in 1969 is very different: there is the Leng Kee Road Light Industrial Area and the Bukit Merah Light Industrial Area. In these two areas, there are many factories for engineering, paints, car assembly and printing. More factories will come up with the completion of the seven-storey flatted factories across the road. Instead of the attap huts we now have five-storey, 10-storey and 16-storey flats. There are now some 52,000 people living in these housing estates. People living in these flats have all the modern conveniences: electricity for lighting and power, gas for heating, and cooking, piped water for all uses, water-carriage system and chutes for the removal of all waste. The standard of public health in the constituency has improved tremendously as a result. And now, with the opening of Bukit Merah Secondary School, we have a modern secondary school there.

Bukit Merah Secondary School is not just another school. It is more than that. The School has been planned to provide an education which caters for the all round development of the pupils. It will help to train our young citizens so that when they leave school, they can fit into society. In addition to the need to train physically fit and knowledgeable pupils, there is the equally urgent task of inculcating correct attitudes and values in our young citizens. There must be a concern and sense of commitment to the Nation and our community. Our young citizens must be imbued with such qualities in order to play an

effective role in society. Character training is an essential part of education. Much depends upon the School and the teachers, but equally important is the parent's supportive role in the education of our young. Parental participation in the educative process either through creating opportunities for learning to take place at home or through encouragement or interest shown in the child's school activities, is of paramount importance.

Our youth are the leaders of tomorrow. It is for this reason that education is so important for it deals with the future of our young citizens who must be guided and prepared for their future roles in society by providing opportunities for initiative and leadership as individuals or members of groups. Our youth constitute one of our most important national assets. They have a determining role to play in deciding what kind of a society we are going to be and in what direction our nation is moving.

We have gone a long way in developing our educational system, and what we have achieved is reflected in the growing number of educated young people in Singapore. The present age is often referred to in terms of its achievements as the age of industrialization, of technology and mechanisation, of national exploits and international cooperation. Thus this age is one whose characteristic expressions are a restless dynamism, ceaseless inquiry, continual change and ever-present obsolescence. Viewed from this content, education in general must be able to adapt itself to a new frame of reference provided by this age.

What we must have is not only an education that fits the pattern of things in our society, it must be quality education. It cannot be an education confined to the four walls of the classroom. No man can be an island, and no school can be a true community unless it is conscious of the wider world outside the school gates. Participation in extra-curricular activities including membership in uniformed organisations like School Cadet Corps, Police Cadet Corps, will help to broaden outlook and experience and contribute towards building the character of

our youth. Participation in community service is equally important. It is a form of character-training, and is of direct benefit to our fellow citizens.

It is useful to remind ourselves that the school community is an extension or a part of the community at large. It is often said that pupils are to study first and equip themselves for future contributions to society. This is too simple a view for the modern fast-changing society. Our youth in school must be organised to feel that they are already contributing to society. For what we are, what we have achieved are inextricably bound with others in the community, and the things we enjoy is to a large measure due to the effort of our forefathers who through sheer hard work, endurance and initiative, had laid the foundation of what Singapore is today. If we are to build a good future for ourselves and for our children and our children's children, we must have the same rugged spirit, the same grit and determination as those who came before us. The future is what we make of it, and with this thought I wish Bukit Merah Secondary School all the best for the future. Thank you.