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Speech by Mr. Ong Soo Chuan, M.P. for Nee Soon Constituency and Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the Upper Thomson Sec.-School 6th Annual Speech & Prize-giving Day and Advisory Committee's Biennial Certificate Presentation Ceremony at 3.00 p.m. on Thursday, 2 Nov 1972

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I am deeply honoured to be invited to address this gathering.

As a young nation without natural resources, the development of human resources has become the only means of increasing our national wealth. Thus, we have to develop the potentials of our youth to the fullest in order to meet the needs of our industrial and commercial societies.

With the rapid expansion of industrialisation to promote or enhance better achievements in the field of economic development, we are facing a serious problem of shortage of skilled technicians. Our immediate task is to train sufficient numbers of technicians of different skills. With the changes in the pattern of trade around the world, our country has to face stiff competition in its export trade of manufactured goods to the 'Third World'. This is because, more and more developing countries are capable of manufacturing goods which require comparatively simple skills. For this reason, our country has to raise the level of technology and expertise in order to be able to compete favourably with other countries. To push our industrial development a step further, we have to produce a pool of highly trained specialists, technologists, scientists, supervisors and technicians. The supervision and management of our industries will have to be more scientific and modern. Only then can we satisfy the demands of our future industries, which are fast becoming more complex and sophisticated.

School is a training institution, and students in secondary schools receive their education in its basic form. And in order to meet the challenges of our time, the Government has laid emphasis on technical education. Secondary school students are required to undergo part-time training in selected technical subjects, like basic

electricity, woodwork and metalwork. Such training provides the students with the basic knowledge to enable them to go for more technical and specialised training in future if they so desire.

At the moment, our Republic is developing its defence capabilities and we need large quantities of modern and sophisticated weapons and equipment. Therefore, there is a great demand for a large number of technical personnels to operate and maintain these weapons and equipment. Our ten-year development policy stresses on 'quality' and not 'quantity'. This simply means that in education, we have to train more technicians of higher level of competence so as to raise the level of our technology. This will enable our industrial development to enter into a new phase.

Here, I would like to take this opportunity to urge the students to concentrate more studies on technical subjects and to correct ^{their} erroneous attitude and concept in paying too much attention on academic education alone. As for the parents, they should encourage their children to study technical subjects or receive vocational training. Only in this way, can their well-equipped children help to play a more constructive role in nation building.

On the other hand, students are also required to work harder at their second language. The Government has determined to implement the policy of bi-lingualism in education. This clearly reflects the importance of knowing a second language. Bi-lingualism helps to bridge the gap that exists in the different cultural backgrounds. It also helps to strengthen one's ability in seeking a more satisfying career. In answer to the needs of our multi-racial society, students belonging to different language media of instructions are required to be proficient in two languages. English is not a commercial language alone. It is also the language of scientific research and technical know-how. As a student, English is very important. As for the Chinese language, it embodies the rich cultural heritage of various philosophies

and concepts on oriental ethics and morality. And if we can truly expose ourselves to the profound influence of such a language, we may emerge as more outstanding people with 'noble in soul and dignified in character'.

This school has done fairly well in the field of second language teaching. And I hope students will work harder to raise the standard of second language in this School. They will find that their knowledge of a second language is very useful when they step into the society.

To-day is also the School Advisory Committee swearing-in ceremony. It is the Government's policy to encourage community participation in education. Our School Advisory Committee, since its inception, has participated actively in helping the school to acquire E.C.A. equipments and in the donation of Audio-Visual Aids for the school. This spirit of devotion and dedication for the common good of education is highly commendable.

As the Chairman has reported in his speech, that the school's music hall project has yet to be completed. I hope that the in-coming committee will do its best to materialise the project in the near future. The project will provide the students of this school, with an ideal place for various extra-curricular and recreational activities.

Education is a form of long-term investment. A country which produces more talented people will in turn receive greater contributions from them. To-day, the students here who are receiving prizes are the outstanding pupils of this school. And it is my sincere hope that these students will continue to strive harder to achieve greater success in future. They will bring honour upon themselves and to the country at large.
