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ADDRESS BY MR CHAI CHONG YII, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR
EDUCATION, AT THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY COMMEMORATION DINNER OF
ST GABRIEL'S SCHOOL ON SATURDAY, 3 JUNE 78 AT 1930 HOURS

It gives me great pleasure to be able to join you this evening to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of St Gabriel's School. On such an occasion, it is not inappropriate for us to take stock of the progress the school has made since its founding 25 years ago. You have achieved progress not only in terms of academic performance and attainments in extra-curricular activities but also in the all-round development of your pupils.

Education involves the provision of various learning situations in which the youth develops into a well-adjusted and knowledgeable person. The school has the responsibility of providing an environment in which each pupil's potential can be fully developed. It is not only in classroom lessons where character can be built. The interaction between teachers and pupils outside the class, the respect of pupils for one another, indeed the whole tone of the school, play very important parts in the development of the individual pupil. I am pleased to see that such an environment exists in your school and that there is, among the teachers and pupils, a deep sense of belonging to the school.

I have also noticed the interest that St Gabriel's School has shown in the moral development of its pupils through the inclusion of moral instruction in your primary and secondary school programmes. All of us, parents, teachers and community leaders, have a role to play in inculcating the proper moral values in the young. The propensity to be a good citizen exists

~~in each person but a good education is necessary to bring this~~
out and develop it. The subject, Education for Living, helps to foster in our young the correct social attitudes which will guide them in their lives.

The need for civic-consciousness among Singaporeans cannot be over-emphasized. Respect for others, their beliefs and their ideals, as well as their property, is fundamental to a harmonious living in a multi-racial society such as ours. We need socially responsible people in our nation who know the difference between right and wrong and who have the moral courage to choose and defend what is right. What can we do to ensure that such qualities are instilled in our young? I believe that Education for Living and other moral education programmes can play a part in the inculcation of correct civic behaviour. Although these are not examination subjects, they are very relevant to our lives and I am glad that the principals of the secondary and primary schools have emphasized this aspect of education.

There is, nowadays, a tendency for some people to discard the old for the new. This is not always wise. Although we want to build a progressive society, it is essential for all of us to realise that our history and traditions will give us the necessary moral ballast to steer our country and our people in the right direction. We all value our heritage, for the identity of a nation is forged not only by present actions and future planning but also by the past.

In the same way, the history and traditions of a school are important because they form the character of the school. This school has had 25 years of history and the teachers and pupils have built up its traditions over the years. I am sure

all of you connected with the school regard its history with pride and seek to uphold its traditions. It is good to remember the past so that you can do even better in the future.

At this juncture, I would like to commend you on the reading programme which was started some five years ago in the school. This is an important step in the effort to cultivate a reading habit in your pupils.

"Reading makes a full man" the saying goes and I agree with this wholeheartedly. Through reading, a whole new world is opened up for the child. He becomes not only more knowledgeable but also more broad-minded as a result of exposure to different ideas and ways of life. He also gains a better understanding of life, people and their emotions.

It is therefore the duty of parents and teachers to make available to young people a wide range of good books, especially books from our Asian region. As books have a strong influence on impressionable young minds, we must teach the young reader to read critically, to question what he reads and to select the ideas and values expressed in books which will stand him in good stead throughout his life. Through reading widely, the young Singaporean will gain an awareness of our Asian social values and culture as well as the values of other societies. I am hopeful that this awareness will bring about a love for our own culture and help us to build a society which is distinctively Singaporean.

Finally, I would like to congratulate you on your past achievements and wish you well in all your future endeavours.