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SPEECH BY THE SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR EDUCATION, MR. CHAI CHONG YII, AT THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS REUNION DINNER OF SERANGOON SECONDARY SCHOOL ON SATURDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1978, AT 7.30 P.M.

I am indeed very happy to have this opportunity of joining you in your 50th anniversary celebrations. Serangoon Secondary School has gone through many changes since it was established 50 years ago in 1928. As can be expected, the environment of the school has changed out of recognition signifying 50 years of progress from its humble beginnings in a rural setting amidst rubber plantations and coconut groves.

It has survived the war years, growing, progressing and evolving from its humble beginnings to a school which now has good modern facilities for academic, technical and commercial studies and a host of extra-curricular activities. Past students of the school, parents, teachers and friends connected with the school must be proud of the progress it has made. In addition, the past students of the school must feel grateful for the good education they received.

However, I must stress here that education and the learning process in general are not confined to the schools and the colleges alone. In fact, we continue to learn in all circumstances, whether at home, in our place of work, at play or at a function. The process of learning begins the moment a child is born. Through keen observation, through imitation of the adults around him, through repetition and through trial and error, the child has already learnt quite a lot of things and ideas by the time he enters school. Therefore, schooling is neither the starting point nor the only place for the learning process.

Learning is a life-long process and schooling only represents the structured and formalised part of one's learning life. The learning process which begins at birth and continues at school as formal education must not come to an abrupt end when one leaves school. The process must continue into adult life and ripe old age. Whether this will be so and how successful it will be depends to a large

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extent on the type of education one receives in school.

If teaching in school is confined to mere imparting of knowledge, repetition of facts and figures and committing to memory dates and formulas, it will serve only a very limited purpose. In a rapidly changing world of exploding knowledge and breath-taking scientific and technological advances, it is vital to teach our children how to learn for themselves, how to keep abreast with the march of knowledge and how to be always interested in the world around them than to cram their little heads with knowledge that might soon become obsolete.

A good teacher must therefore train his pupils to think for themselves, to analyse problems and situations on their own and to search for facts and solutions independently. In addition to this, teachers must also devote equal attention to character building, the development of aesthetic appreciation and the transmission of values. For knowledge without character and without a good sense of values may do more harm than good. Let us hope that our teachers and our schools would do their utmost to lay the foundation for independent life-long learning and development of character, while their pupils are in schools.

Finally, I take great pleasure in wishing the school continued success in all its endeavours and in joining you all in your 50th anniversary celebrations.

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