

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • TEL: 3378191 ext 352, 353, 354 / 3362207 / 336??71

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SPEECH BY MR WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (HEALTH AND CULTURE) AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF PU HUI KINDERGARTEN AT LORONG 102, CHANGI ROAD ON 12 DECEMBER 1982 AT 11.00 AM

I am particularly honoured to be here this morning to officiate at the opening of your kindergarten. The Li Teck Chuan Cin Tong Institute has, over the last decade, achieved remarkable progress. Although the religious activities form the major aspect of the Institute's programme, it has, nevertheless, not forgotten the cultural and educational programmes. The Pu Hui Kindergarten as it stands today bears testimony to the foresight and untiring effort of the management committee in serving the needs of not only the members of the Institute but the community at large. I therefore would like to take this opportunity to thank the management committee for a job well-done. To the teachers, they too deserve a special thanks for their dedication and perseverance. Here I am reminded of the tribute made to teachers by the Greek philosopher, Aristotle, when he said, "They who educate children well are more to be honoured than they who produce them; for these only gave them life, those the art of living well".

In order to have 'the art of living well' one has to have a good education. Education becomes the vehicle for social mobility. Confucius himself stressed the importance of education. Among the reasons he gave were, firstly, ability does not depend on birth. He further said that "Only a wide dissemination of education can ensure that all of the most capable will be given the opportunity to develop themselves not only for their own good but for the good of the society as well". Secondly, Confucius rightly reminded us of the important nexus between education and statecraft. To him, the state is a co-operative enterprise. Thus an enlightened citizenry is necessary to permit the affairs of the state to be run effectively.

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The second prerequisite for the 'art of living well', besides education, is good moral values. I am indeed happy to note that the motto of this kindergarten is based on decorum, righteousness, honesty and modesty. These are time-honoured values which form the corner-stones of any decent and civilised society. A society practising the antitheses of these values will degenerate itself into one where the strong reigns supreme, the thieves and scoundrels become rich, and charlatans and the scallywags benefit.

It is a sad commentary on our society when one reads of Singaporeans indulging themselves in activities detrimental to the good name of the society. It is because of these errant few that the image of the ugly Singaporean emerges itself within our society. It is said that some Singaporeans suffer from three social ills. I would like to refer them as the 3M disease - money-minded, mine- or individual-centred and morally deficient. We read press reports on criminal breach of trust, commercial fraud, litterbugs, unneighbourly and intolerant residents, not to mention robbery, murder and rape happening in Singapore. What is even sadder and more contemptuous is that among those who fall victims to these baser instincts are men of position and status in the social hierarchy. It is ironical that to some, the higher the education the deeper is their moral ineptitude.

The provision of a kindergarten in this Institute can be regarded as a positive contribution to the society. With a strong sense of commitment and dedication on the part of the teachers in upholding the moral virtues as enshrined in Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, I have no doubt that the children will benefit tremendously in the course of their stay in this kindergarten. As the word kindergarten means the "children's garden" one would associate a kindergarten as a beautiful and refreshing place where the children find enjoyment and happiness in the learning and unfolding of the knowledge and virtues of man.

Learning is an on-going process. It starts from the cradle and ends in the grave. Singaporeans are fortunate in having easy access to learning nearer their homes. They should therefore avail themselves of the opportunities and facilities provided by continuously upgrading themselves. The little discomfort and sacrifice they have to make in terms

of time, distance and energy will prove beneficial in the long-run. Here I am reminded of what Prophet Muhammad said of the sacrifice needed in the pursuit of learning when he mentioned, "Seek knowledge although it be in China". In other words, one must be prepared to travel far in the pursuit of knowledge and in the interest of learning.

In conclusion, I must say that the management committee and all those associated with this Institute have, undoubtedly, contributed much and sacrificed more to make this Institute what it is today. If it is not for their moral strength and physical endeavour this Institute would have lost much of its glory and glamour. May I wish you continued success and prosperity in the years ahead.

I now have great pleasure in declaring the Pu Hui Kindergarten open.
