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PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(HEALTH AND CULTURE), AT THE SANG NILA UTAMA SCHOOL'S
SPEECH DAY ON SATURDAY, 20 AUGUST 1983 AT 10.30 AM

Looking at the profile and the background information of the school, it is noted that the school's enrolment has declined. It now has a population of 598 pupils, 50 per cent of whom are girls. Malay pupils constitute 56 per cent of the enrolment. Your data also reveal that many of you come from humble homes and quite a number come from big families too. The school, I am told, faces a number of problems in its academic programme. Amongst other things are the high rate of absenteeism among the low achievers, lack of motivation in your study and inadequate home support. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the overall performance of the school (English stream) is below average.

I am extracting this information for two reasons. Firstly, to activate the pupils' mental and emotional apathy towards learning. Secondly, to commend the school, especially the teachers on their empathy for the pupils under their charge. Let me start by making some reference to the pupils.

I am very much disturbed by your lack of self-discipline at home. Your school survey reveals that 64 per cent of you spend between two to four hours every day watching television. On the other hand, only 36 per cent of you spend two to four hours doing your schoolwork/homework. This is an example of your misplaced priority.

Your job is to devote more time to your studies than to your recreational or entertainment pursuits. The fact that you are below average in your performance demands that you need more time to study and comprehend your academic work. What you lack in intelligence must be augmented by your perseverance and diligence. You must not let yourselves be led astray by the pull of the television. This ultimately will tend to erode your self-control and self-discipline. In the end, you will be the losers in not making the grade in your examinations.

Turning to the school, I am indeed encouraged by the additional effort put by your teachers. Over and above the normal teaching assignments, your teachers are involved in three other educational areas which form the additional supportive framework in the overall school programme - the Financial Assistance Scheme, the Counselling Programme and the Reading Scheme. Your teachers have, in fact, shown tremendous care and concern for your welfare. Through the Counselling Programme, the teachers are at hand to assist you. You will find much satisfaction and relief in discussing your problems with your teachers. This will have the necessary therapeutic effect on you and hopefully, it will enhance your motivation towards learning. You should also participate fully in the school's Reading Scheme. You must start this reading habit in you if you are to improve your language skills. This demands a lot of sacrifice on your part. With regard to the school's Financial Assistance Scheme, I am informed that some 282 pupils have benefited from this scheme. I am sure this is much appreciated by both the recipients and their parents.

Let me now say a few words on the role of the parents. Parental support at home will help strengthen their children's academic performance. They can do this

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