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SPEECH BY MR HO KAH LEONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (EDUCATION), AT THE PAYA LEBAR METHODIST GIRLS' SCHOOL FOUNDER'S DAY THANKSGIVING AND GRADUATION SERVICE ON THURSDAY, 14 OCTOBER 1982 AT 9.30 AM

First of all, my wife and I would like to thank the school authority for inviting us here this morning to join you in celebrating your 66th Founder's Day Thanksgiving and Graduation Service.

The Methodist Church in 1916 had the foresight to start a rural school to provide Christian education for the children in the district. In fact, this school first started as a boys' school and it was only later that girls were admitted and provided with an elementary education. In 1949 the school became a fully government-aided primary school with girls attending the morning session and the boys, the afternoon session. It was only in 1967 that Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School became a girls' school.

The school has come a long way since then. Over the years, the pupil enrolment has grown to the present figure of 1,262. Within the constraints of limited physical and financial resources, school improvements have been made to cater for the rising enrolment and the exacting demands of providing a meaningful education for the children. By present day standards, the school premises and facilities fall short of the desirable norm. Yet, despite the constraints, academic standards have been maintained and the demand for places in the school is on the rise. This speaks very well for the school. Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School has clearly proved that quality education can still be provided where physical facilities and resources are not as ideal as one would wish these to be. However, this is not to say that improving the physical facilities and resources of schools is not important. It is very important to upgrade school resources and facilities. Nevertheless, it

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should be recognised that quality teaching, determination and hard work are vital ingredients in a successful education programme.

Academically, the school has achieved considerable success. Since 1967 in both the PSLE and the GCE 'O' level examinations, the school has obtained more than 90 per cent passes. More important in terms of achievement is the success of the school in providing an education which caters for the moral development and character training of pupils who graduate from the school to be responsible and loyal citizens.

Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School is among the schools in Singapore with a history and an established tradition and character. This has been built up over 66 years through the dedication and commitment of the principals and the staff, many of whom are old girls of the school proud of their life-long association with their Alma Mater. I am sure that this characteristic Methodist Girls' School spirit and tradition will continue to grow and be further strengthened over the years.

It is highly commendable that Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School has responded so positively to the demands and the needs of the community and that it has embarked on a major project to build a primary school and a secondary school in Hougang New Town. More pupils will have the opportunity to benefit from the education provided in these two schools in the future.

The task of raising the required building funds has been undertaken by the principal and the staff and the Building Project Committee under the capable leadership of Mr Lee Kim Tah. It is encouraging to see that the Church, parents, old girls, well-wishers and the community responding so positively. The Ministry of Education will give the school every support that it can and in this connection, I am pleased to announce that the Government has approved the request of the school for 80 per cent subsidy of the building project. It now remains for the school authorities to raise the other 20 per cent. Although in absolute terms, this 20 per cent is still a large sum of money, I am confident that with the overwhelming support from all quarters, it will not be long before all your

plans and vision for a new primary and a new secondary school can become a reality.

In Singapore there are equal educational opportunities for girls and boys in all fields of education. Gone are the days when a girl's place is only in the kitchen. Women have proved themselves just as efficient and as capable as the men in carrying out responsible and professional jobs in society. Yours is a doubly challenging role. Economically in the work force, you are expected to make your contribution. Also, in partnership with the men, it is your responsibility as well to bring up the next generation of Singaporeans. With the training and education you receive at Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School, you will have the capacity and the ability to measure up to society's expectations of you.

It only remains for me now to congratulate the prize winners who have earned this honour bestowed on them today. Like these prize winners, all of you must continue to strive for excellence in everything that you do in the future and be worthy of being pupils of Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School all the very best and continued success in the years ahead.

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