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SPEECH BY MR HO KAH LEONG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(EDUCATION), AT THE HOLY INNOCENTS CHINESE GIRLS' SCHOOL'S
50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION AND THE OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE SCHOOL'S NEW BUILDING ON SATURDAY, 16 JULY 83 AT 5.00 PM

Today is a very momentous day for Holy Innocents Chinese Girls' School. The School's opening of the extension block has been timed to coincide with the 50th Anniversary. Such a doubly joyous occasion naturally calls for a celebration and I am indeed very honoured to be invited to officiate at this ceremony.

Holy Innocents Chinese Girls' School was the first Chinese girls' primary school to be founded by the Roman Catholic Church in Singapore in the year 1932.

From the time of its establishment till today, the school has witnessed several changes in order to keep abreast with the times.

The school had an arduous beginning because of the generally held belief, among the Chinese community, that illiteracy was especially desirable virtue of women. At that time, this was predominant in the village and many parents did not want to send their daughters to school.

It was Rev Father Edward Bechera's courage and foresight that led to the establishment of Holy Innocents Chinese Girls' School. For the first time there was a Chinese girls' primary school in Serangoon village which provided the girls a golden opportunity for education. The Rev's contribution to education most certainly cannot be overlooked.

After World War II, the standard of English was gradually raised. This was the result of the realisation that English was necessary for social needs and better job prospects.

In the 1960s, the Government emphasised the implementation of the bilingual policy in schools. Holy Innocents Chinese Girls' School responded to this policy and in 1973, it decided to use English as the medium of instruction for, among other subjects, mathematics and science. The School also increased the exposure time for English from 30 per cent to 50 per cent.

The school attained good results in academic performance and extra-curricular activities during the last 10 years. In 1980 and 1981, two of her pupils were awarded the Prime Minister's Book Prize. For the past five years, the results of the second language paper at the Primary School Leaving Examination have been between 85 per cent and 100 per cent. The school was selected by the Ministry of Education as one of the Special Assistance Plan primary schools in 1978.

In recent years, the enrolment figure has been on the increase. This has made the original number of classrooms insufficient. In Dec 1979, a committee on the School's extension project was set up to raise funds for the project. And today the new school building has been completed.

The cost of the building was \$1.7 million, 80 per cent of which ie \$1.4 million was met by the Government. A plot of land for the purpose of the extension was given by the Roman Catholic Church.

Undeniably, the School's good performance is a symbol of achievement and an indication of the present Government's contribution to education.

I sincerely hope that the Holy Innocents Girls' School will continue to strive towards excellence and maintain the good tone of the school.

Now, it is my pleasure to declare the new extension block of Holy Innocents Chinese Girls' School open.

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