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05-1/80/11105 NOV 1980

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ADDRESS BY MR HOWE YOON CHONG, MINISTER OF DEFENCE AND MP FOR
POTONG PASIR, AT THE POTONG PASIR PAP KINDERGARTEN GRADUATION
CEREMONY AT MACRITCHIE SCHOOL ON SAT., NOV. 8, 1980, AT 7.30 P.M.

Singaporeans are serious-minded people. This is necessarily so because we have to struggle for a living. In our scramble for economic progress there is little room left for fun and laughter in our daily lives. Many of us have noticed that wherever Singaporeans congregate there is not much joy and gaiety. We are much too concerned about our day to day affairs. However in gatherings where there are children the situation is markedly different. Here we see many smiling faces. There is laughter and joy. This is because children have as yet been spared the burdens and cares that adults have to shoulder.

Today's gathering is one where the children of the Potong Pasir PAP Kindergarten bring much joy, gaiety, and laughter not only to their parents and teachers but also to all who join them in this Graduation Ceremony. Let us all hope that this condition of joy and laughter can be spread more and more into our community activities and be infectious to more and more Singaporeans.

I am glad to be with you this evening to witness the graduation of these little children. Parents should not be concerned over how much book knowledge is taught in the kindergarten. There is plenty of time for our little children to learn about various subjects. There are too many subjects that the modern world requires our children to learn. Some subjects are necessary and important. But many subjects are only of temporary usefulness. Much of the book learning is only useful as a means of disciplining our minds to teach us how to think out solutions to our problems. Much of what we learn from books is of temporary usefulness especially in times of rapid change and scientific development.

It is more important that every child should know how to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. The child should learn at an early age how to live in harmony and to show concern for

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others, how not to take advantage of the weak, how to keep things in good order and never to damage or destroy property whether it be his own, his friend's, or belonging to the community. The kindergarten should not make learning a chore for the little children. It should rather allow the little children to play and learn while they are having fun.

Good kindergarten teachers will make sure that in planning the lessons for their children they consciously avoid formal lessons but rather permit the children to naturally become aware of these important matters through playing with one another. It is much too early to force book knowledge into the minds of these little children of four to five years of age. To force them to study can raise resistance which will only dampen their enthusiasm to learn. In some instances it can even close their minds to future book learning.

Parents should therefore encourage little children to play among themselves, to have fun, and to enjoy themselves while they are in kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers should let the children learn and have fun and laughter at the same time. Lessons to attain this objective can be conducted not only in the classrooms, but also in playing, dancing, singing songs, or going out on excursions.

This new kindergarten has been built with the support of the Potong Pssir people as well as with the financial assistance of many of our friends and well-wishers both within and outside the Potong Pasir constituency. We should work hard to ensure that the kindergarten can live up to the highest expectations of our supporters and benefactors.
