

ADDRESS BY THE PRIME MINISTER AT THE
OPENING OF THE QUEENSTOWN BRANCH LIBRARY ON
THURSDAY, 30TH APRIL, 1970

One sign of an educated society is the number of books read by the people. We have had universal primary education for over a decade. Today we have a literate society. But a literate society is not necessarily an educated society. One test of an educated man is his ability to continue reading and learning throughout his life.

Last year 53.4% children passed the Primary 6 examination to get to secondary school. This figure will improve with time, with better trained teachers, improved teaching methods, and more facilities, like audio-visual aid.

But parents are the most important of all the factors. If they do not have large families, and anything more than 3 is large, then they can spend more time and money in nurturing their children. Education will begin even before the children go to school, as the children play in homes or kindergartens with educational toys and nursery books, and learn nursery rhymes.

This branch library in Queenstown is a milestone in our rising standards of life. We shall have similar branch libraries in every major area, like Toa Payoh, Katong, Jurong, Woodlands. First, they provide a convenient access to books which most people cannot afford to buy. Next, they are sanctuaries of peace and quiet where concentration and better work is possible, particularly when neighbours are inconsiderate.

Unlike countries in temperate climates, our homes have open windows. They let in noise. For some strange reason, most people insist that others in the neighbourhood should share their TV, Radio, Hifi, mahjong, or just loud conversation. Hence the need for a library.

Slowly, but surely, we shall reduce the noise level of life in Singapore.

High density living in high-rise buildings requires considerate habits, low radio and television sounds, no honking of motor horns and no fixing of special gadgets to exhaust of cars and motor-cycles to amplify noise.

In the next decade we should have an educated society, where the majority are considerate by habits nurtured in home and in the schools, ever conscious of the need not to invade their neighbours' privacy. This branch library marks one milestone along the road up the hill towards a more educated society.

National Archives of Singapore