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SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER MR LEE KUAN YEW

AT THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD'S BIRTHDAY MEMORIAL

SCHOLARSHIP FUND BOARD'S BURSARY AWARDS

PRESENTATION AT THE PUB AUDITORIUM ON SATURDAY,

6 OCTOBER 1990 AT 3.00 PM

For some years I have been puzzled why Malay girls outperform Malay boys in our junior colleges and universities. A partial explanation is that after their "O" levels, more Malay boys than girls prefer to go to the two polytechnics which is the right decision. In the two polytechnics, Malay boys outnumber Malay girls. But in the total figures for all three tertiary institutions, universities, junior colleges and polytechnics, boys are outnumbered by girls.

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My Malay colleagues in Parliament offer me this explanation, that Malay parents look after daughters more carefully than sons. Sons are given more freedom to play with their friends. Girls are under closer supervision. They are expected to remain at home to help in the general housework. The result of

better parental discipline over girls is their higher scholastic achievements. So there are more Malay girls than boys in our junior colleges and at the polytechnics and the universities.

If Malay parents were to be as firm on discipline with their sons as their daughters, I believe their sons would do better.

Voluntary organisations like LBKM have helped parents in their efforts to raise the educational standards of Malay students. The Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Memorial Scholarship Fund Board is celebrating its 25th Anniversary this year. Each year, since 1965, the Board has been awarding bursaries to an increasing number of recipients. I am happy there are many concerned leaders in the Malay community who realise the importance of a good education as a key to progress and are prepared to help the more promising students. I also hope more will come forward to contribute funds and help the Malay children to improve their education.

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