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SPEECH BY MR ONG SOO CHUAN, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY  
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS) AT THE 11TH ANNUAL SPEECH DAY AND  
PRIZE PRESENTATION OF UPPER THOMSON SECONDARY SCHOOL  
ON TUESDAY, 8 NOVEMBER 1977 AT 11.00 A.M.

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Times keep advancing. We are living in a rapidly changing era, subject to the influence of continuous changes all the time. Thus, it is not possible for the teachers to impart all the necessary knowledge to the students, and neither is it possible for the students to stay on in the school for a few more years even if they so desire. However, the teachers can inculcate in you the spirit of self-study and self-motivation and teach you the necessary fundamentals and methods of study to enable you to carry on the process of self-education for the rest of your life.

As students, you must learn conscientiously in school to equip and prepare yourselves for future needs. Knowledge is being increased everyday, but the amount of time at our disposal for learning always remains unchanged. Therefore, time is very valuable. At this young age, you can learn faster and more easily.

It must be realized that nothing is for free or can be taken for granted in life. The same is true of study. It demands a great deal of effort. In the process of our growth and development, we may run into lots of difficulties and suffer setbacks but we must have the courage to overcome them. Therefore, we must set lofty goals for our life and work towards their realization with utmost perseverance to ensure a good future for us.

Apart from text books, the students must cultivate the habit of doing lots of extra-curricular reading. All good books, of whatever categories, help edify, inform and enlighten us. I think education should mean more than helping the students secure the desired paper qualifications or an employable skills; it should be concerned with shaping their perception of society, the country, the world and the relations between man and man. Book knowledge alone, therefore, is not enough. The teachers must encourage the students to do a lot of extra-curricular reading so that they may acquire broad general knowledge which may in some way complement what they have learnt from the text books.

Secondary education is a general education. The students must widen their horizon to acquire all-round knowledge. The teachers must help the students to cultivate the correct mentality towards reading and instruct them on the systematic methods of study. Ideal education should provide for self-exploration by the students under the guidance and instruction of the teachers, for only knowledge thus obtained can take deep roots. Learning and knowledge depends mainly on voluntary in-depth research, exploration, critical thinking and reflection. I am glad to know that your School is actively encouraging the students to engage in extra-curricular reading and is trying to add to the school library by, for example, setting up mini-library at class level, in an effort to help the students cultivate the habit of reading to enrich their knowledge. This is most encouraging.

As we all know, library has an indispensable role to play in school. It takes a prominent place in school because it represents a repository of the valuable experiences and knowledge of man recorded in various ages, in various regions and in various languages. Therefore, the students must make the best use of the library by making regular visits there to browse all kinds of books, be they related or unrelated to their text books, so as to enrich their knowledge.

On the other hand, students must also pay attention to the cultivation of cultural values and moral norms. In recent years, social changes arising from the Republic's rapid economic development and industrialization have resulted in evil influence of all kinds seeking inroad into our society. In view of this, students must increase their awareness and develop their character and personal integrity in the right direction to guard against the contamination of such evil influence. This deserves the greatest attention.

I wish to take this opportunity to congratulate the prize-winning students today for they represent the elite of the school. I hope they will keep up their effort to strive for further success ahead and, reinforced by the moral guidance from the teachers, prepare themselves adequately for contribution of our nation and society in future. As for the unsuccessful students, I want to exhort them to redouble their effort so as to win a prize in the years ahead. May I now wish all of you every success.

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