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SPEECH BY MR. ONG TENG CHEONG, ACTING MINISTER FOR CULTURE,
FOR THE 3RD FOUNDATION AND PRIZE GIVING CEREMONY AT
EAST PAYOH SECONDARY SCHOOL ON SATURDAY 1 JULY '78 AT 5.30 PM

My first association with East Payoh Secondary School was when I officially declared it open on 7 September '76. That was almost two years ago. Tonight, I am indeed happy to be back again in your school and to be able to share with you the occasion of the Third Foundation and Prize Giving Day and Fund Raising Dinner.

I wish to congratulate the Principal and the staff of the school on the progress that has been achieved since 1976. During this short period of less than two years, the students and the staff, with the assistance of the School Advisory Committee, have successfully organized two fund-raising campaigns. The funds, I understand, are being used not only to develop and expand the school's sports amenities, but also to assist bright but needy students to pay for their Cambridge examination fees. These are laudable objectives, and the money is indeed well spent.

Singapore is not endowed with any natural resources; our people, especially the young, are our only precious asset. The future of Singapore depends on our youths. We should, therefore, spare no efforts to develop their potential to the full. In this connection, I am pleased to announce that the Kim Keat Branch of the PAP is presently working out a Book Prize scheme for outstanding students in schools in Kim Keat Constituency. The book prize will be awarded to the top students in each of the schools, based on the results of the school final examinations in each year. Once the details of the scheme have been finalised, the Principals of the four schools in Kim Keat Constituency will accordingly be informed. The Book Prize scheme will, however, be launched with effect from 1978.

I wish also to take this opportunity to commend the School Advisory Committee for supporting and assisting the school in

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organizing these activities. Apart from fund raising, the Committee should also look into ways and means of establishing a meaningful dialogue between the school and the local community. The School Advisory Committee, comprising intellectuals and community leaders, can effectively play a dual role in this regard. On the one hand, the School Advisory Committee can help the school to understand and appreciate the problems and needs of the local community, and on the other hand, it can encourage the local community to take a greater interest in the affairs of the school.

In addition to strengthening the rapport between the school and the local community, this kind of dialogue can help to foster and enhance community feeling and identity, create good neighbourliness, and inculcate other socially desirable attitudes and wholesome habits that are so essential for community living. Presently, HDB housing estates resemble large, sprawling hotel complexes with residents moving in and out like tourists without knowing one another. The need to develop these estates into friendly, tightly-knit communities cannot be over-emphasized, for by 1980, 70% of Singapore's population would be living in these estates.

The School Advisory Committee will find all this a great challenge - a challenge, I am confident, the Committee will proudly accept.

The building of a nation cannot be the concern of only a few dedicated, patriotic citizens. Neither can the creation of a closely-knit community in Kim Keat Constituency be left to a handful of willing workers. It must be the collective effort of everyone living in Kim Keat Constituency, from the rich to the poor, from professional and intellectual elites to humble labourers and hawkers.

I would, therefore, like to invite those who reside in Kim Keat Constituency and who are concerned to bring about greater cohesiveness among residents in the Constituency to come forward and render their services to the School Advisory Committees, Management Committees of Community Centres, Citizens' Consultative Committees, Youth Committees and other community organizations. In particular, I would like to appeal to the professional and intellectual elites to make available their time, services and expertise for the benefit of Kim Keat Constituency and its residents. Participation and involvement in community work is immeasurably much more spiritually and morally exhilarating than one imagines. It is not only beneficial for the whole community but is also good for one's soul.

I wish you all a happy evening.

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