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SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, AT THE NANYANG GIRLS HIGH SCHOOL 75TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION DINNER AT THE WESTIN PLAZA (RAFFLES BALLROOM) ON 26 JUL 92 AT 7.00 PM

1 Today's women can do almost anything men can. Career opportunities are open to Singapore women in all sectors of our economy.

2 In education, the proportion of girls to boys in our schools is close to parity. In fact, the girls in our pre-university centres and junior colleges outnumber the boys. At NUS, there are about as many women undergraduates as there are men undergraduates. To top it off, women get a headstart of two years in their careers, and they live much longer than men!

3 Women in Singapore have enjoyed for decades what women in some countries have only dared to dream about. The special rights of women to protection from offences against them are enshrined in the Women's Charter of 1961. Since the 1960s, there has been political, legal, economic, educational and social equality for Singapore women. The only factors which determine your success are your own aptitude, capability, performance and diligence.

4 Balancing the demands of work in the home and work outside the home is not an easy task for working women. A wise man once said, "If you educate a man you educate a person, but if you educate a woman you educate a family."

Women are still generally held to be responsible for the smooth running of the home. This centuries-old tradition is found in civilised societies both East and West.

5 I am happy that among the younger generation, this strict division of domestic roles between men and women have begun to break down. Husbands are finally helping their wives with house-chores and looking after the baby. This augurs well for the future of the family. There will be greater intimacy from mutual sharing and caring. Through their new found involvement with pampers and milk bottles, fathers will also find a new closeness to their children.

6 Singapore is a small country with a relatively small population. And women make up half of this population. We must help and ensure that women achieve their full potential in whatever role they choose to play in our society.

7 This is where I feel that schools like Nanyang Girls High have played an important role in our society. Despite your switch from being a Chinese-medium school to the use of English as the primary language of instruction, you have upheld the high standards and fine Chinese-school traditions that were painstakingly established over the last 75 years.

8 Your teachers taught you what was really worth knowing and made you want to know it. But you were taught much more than just Literature, Science and Maths; your teachers also imparted to you the noble values and

traditions of filial piety, hospitality and community spiritedness.

9 Your school has been consistently producing top students in the G.C.E. 'O' Level examinations. They are effectively bilingual, and more than half achieve distinctions in both the English and Chinese language. Just as impressive are your sports and ECA achievements. This is to be encouraged. The classroom may be the training ground where one acquires academic knowledge, but it is through sports and ECA that one's character is moulded and put to the test.

10 I hope you will keep your torch of excellence burning bright. The pride and honour, and the future and destiny of this fine school rests on you. I wish all students, past and present, and staff of Nanyang Girls High School a happy 75th Anniversary and continued success in your future endeavours.

National Archives of Singapore

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Cc: INFORMATION5 (8812:GVT224)
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