

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY DR WAN SOON BEE, MINISTER OF STATE,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF JIN TAI PRIMARY SCHOOL
ON WEDNESDAY, 19 SEPTEMBER 1984 AT 6.00 PM

This year we are celebrating our 25 years of nation-building. I think Singaporeans have every reason to feel proud. We feel proud, not just because we are an independent nation for 25 years. Many resource rich countries have also gained independence after the Second World War. But after all these years nothing much have been done for the people. In fact, in some countries there are more troubles, more poverty, more violence and more sufferings. We feel proud because we have built up a nation which enables our people to live in peace and prosperity. We have made these achievements inspite of the fact that we are a small country with no natural resources and it is done within a short span of only 25 years. The only asset we can claim to have is our people.

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Whilst we are celebrating our 25 years of nation-building, it may be useful to remind Singaporeans that a lot of hard work has been put in and tremendous sacrifices have been made in order to arrive at what we are today. And we must be thankful to the older generation of leaders and citizens for their sacrifices and contributions. Singaporeans must realise that prosperity and security are not the natural order of things. Just look at what happens in the countries around the world. There are still so much violence, poverty and sufferings. And every year millions of children died before their first birthday because of malnutrition and lack of medical care.

In the last 25 years we also faced many seemingly insurmountable difficulties. But we worked hard and honestly to overcome all the obstacles. We have succeeded in making great achievements economically and socially. Our people have benefited. They are now enjoying prosperity and security and a high standard of living.

But let us not live on the laurels of the past 25 years and let us not be satisfied with what we have achieved so far. We must now look forward to the next 25 years. The world is faced with serious economic problems and armed conflicts. There will be many new problems waiting for us to solve. These problems might be different from those existed in the initial years of independence. But they can be even more difficult, more complex and more challenging.

If we want to further enhance the life of our people, if we want Singapore to continue to progress and prosper then, we must understand what makes Singapore tick. And secondly, we must have the determination in wanting to make Singapore tick. Thirdly, we must be able to visualise what are the possible problems that will confront Singapore in future and take appropriate steps to resolve them long before these problems emerge. Fourthly, we must set our priorities right. But the most important factor still lies in the proper development and management of our human resource. This is the reason why the Government is investing heavily in education. In Singapore, every child is given the opportunity to go to school. And great effort has been made to ensure that every opportunity is given to each and every one of our children to develop to their maximum potentials. This has led to the introduction of the various education policies; the streaming at Primary Three, Primary Six and the gifted children programme. They are designed to help all our children as much as we can. The objective of all these policies is clear and simple. By streaming the children

at the various stages, it is hoped that the faster learners can learn at their own pace. At the same time the slower learners can be given additional assistance by the schools so that they too can get the maximum benefits out of the education system. Of course, different people have different opinions. Even the experts differ in their views at time. But what is important is that the government is doing its best to help our children in achieving their goals.

Jin Tai Primary School is yet another ultra modern primary school which the Government has built at great cost. The school environment is pleasant and conducive for studying. It has a comprehensive range of facilities. All these will make teaching and learning much easier and more pleasant. The Principal, the teachers and pupils have every reason to be proud to be in a school like this. The good environment and the many modern facilities certainly are a great help to the teachers and the pupils of the school. But, in the final analysis it is the quality and the attitude of the principal, teachers, pupils and parents that will determine the success of the school.

Teaching is not an easy job and can be a thankless one. The responsibility of the teachers is great. They form a vital link in our education system. They are playing a very import role in nation-building. They certainly deserve more respect from the society than what they are getting now. The strength of this link often depends on the dedication and commitment of our teachers to their students. Education is more than just acquiring knowledge and skills. Another important aspect of education is the moulding of the attitude and the character of our younger generation. So it is important for the teachers to also impart to their pupils a healthy life style and help them to develop proper attitudes towards their work and society.

It is also true that a school is as good as the quality of its students. You may have the best teachers, facilities, the administration and the largest school budget, but if the students don't play their part, then the school will not excel. Let us examine some qualities of a good student. A good student is an all-rounded person. He or she is humble and keen to learn from his/her teachers and fellow students. He studies hard and participates actively in school activities. In other word, he enjoys his school life and looks forward to school everyday.

Lastly, parents have a very important part to play in the educational process. One crucial factor in developing excellence among our students is the time that parents spend with their children and the interest they have in their children's school work. In a recent study by the University of Michigan in the United States, the researcher found that Taiwanese and Japanese children out-do American children academically. The reason for the better performance of the Taiwanese and Japanese children over the American was not due to the longer time the children spent in school or on homework. It is the involvement of the parents in their children's education that made the difference. These parents help their children with their homework if the children had difficulties with their school work. The study concluded that family relationships were more important than budgets, student-teacher ratio, or administration in helping the children do well in school. These are important lessons for Singapore as we seek to develop our human resources. Parents must play their part in providing their children with love, concern, moral and spiritual education of the child. Children need individual attention which only the parents can give. Instead of relying on tutors, they could be personally involved in the homework of their children.

I hope these words of encouragement would spur Jin Tai Primary School to greater heights in their pursuit of academic excellence and their desire to produce well-rounded students. I wish the school, the staff, and students the very best in all that they do.

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