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SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(FOREIGN AFFAIRS), AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF JUNYUAN
PRIMARY SCHOOL ON 2 SEPTEMBER 1989 AT 5.30 PM

We have witnessed a major transformation of our society in the 1980s. The new decade will continue to witness even greater changes. These are major changes, not temporary phenomena, and there will be no "return to normal" because the norms will keep on changing. However, to undergo rapid changes successfully, we need to maintain stability so that our society will remain resilient. Seen in the educational perspective, the dual role of school and society in achieving this balance will be a difficult one.

Junyuan Primary School I believe, is poised towards facing these twin challenges of the 1990s and beyond. Through the existing facilities and curricula, the school is preparing itself towards fulfilling the task of creating an excellent society. With a single session in hand, teachers and students will set their minds and souls into experiencing and exploring rare opportunities not found in many dual-session schools. It is hoped that in doing so, we are not only able to better our learning process, but also to acquire values that enable our students to possess sufficient knowledge and character to be better citizens of tomorrow.

Whether our children will be hard-working, highly motivated, conscientious, diligent, healthy and strong in both body and mind and at the same time courteous, caring, unselfish and become creatures of community or otherwise will depend on the kind of input from the environment, schools included.

As long as education remains, and I believe it will remain, as the primary means of social mobility, everyone will strive in achieving this lofty goal. For the pupils, it will be a rare satisfaction of having cleared the initial hurdle towards a more meaningful life. For the teachers, it would be an invaluable compensation in the form of professional satisfaction and for the parents, it would be a great psychological reinforcement in their search for better family life. In the final analysis, however, the community and nation shall be the major beneficiary because it receives an additional and very much needed booster rocket to propel itself into new heights.

I strongly believe within the visible compound of Junyuan Primary School and its people, there lies latent potential for the nation's future. These potentials must be identified, developed and polished so that our hopes for the future will be brighter.

In doing so, there is real need for us to approach educational upliftment of our children in a wider perspective. It has been a long accepted fact that the performance of our pupils depends on the input from the environment, apart from their natural abilities and talents.

In this respect, a conducive environment must be created for them to learn and develop their potential to the maximum. Creating such environment would mean involving the students, teachers and parents, through organised and co-ordinated efforts, in such a manner that each party is given complementary roles to play. It is even more important for each party to know what the others are doing.

I am happy to note that there has been tremendous improvement in relationship between schools and parents. Through Parent-Teachers Association and regular exchange of information on how our pupils perform in their Continual Assessment and Examinations, parents were made aware of their children's academic performance.

Some schools are even more concerned on the poor performers by occasionally inviting parents of such students to meet their teachers.

Through "meet-the-parents sessions" teachers and parents were briefed on the academic performance of pupils and action lines were identified to improve the pupils' learning process.

However, I strongly feel that to some pupils there is need to do more than these. We have to improve the qualitative aspect of such endeavour by broadening the parent-teacher interaction.

Through the existing parent-teacher associations, or through the School Advisory Committee, parents can be invited to participate in school projects such as end-of-the-year camping, fund raising, cultural and sports activities and made to involve themselves in the children's school life.

This will help to nurture greater sense of sharing between the parents and the school and between the school and neighbourhood. Similarly, schools can take more active part in the neighbourhood's community life by participating in various activities organised by the local organisations.

Such broader two-way participation in each other's community life will go a long way in creating better and more meaningful life.

On this note, it is my great pleasure to declare Junyuan Primary School open.

May Junyuan be able to truly live up to its motto of "Work To Excel."