

13/10/2003

Quality education given by La Sallian schools

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IT was with a deep sense of pride that I, as an old student of St Michael's Institution (SMI), Ipoh, accepted my alma mater's invitation to address the school on its 2003 Speech Day.

I left SMI in 1962. Dedicated Brothers and teachers of the La Sallian Schools have selflessly given their best years to provide quality education to Malaysian students.

I am a product of La Sallian education and much of what I have acquired in terms of character building and ethics is largely due to my early years at SMI.

SMI is truly a testimony of the La Sallian ethos that education is for everyone, regardless of race, wealth, status and religion.

It was these Brothers, among others, who brought the English language to our forefathers.

Their dedication to their calling and students are legendary. The exemplary lives of the Brothers serve as models for the students.

We have now reached the crossroads in the life of La Sallian education. Those of us who are privileged to have passed through the portals of its schools have a responsibility to pass on and to uphold this tradition.

We have seen the wonderful things the system has done for us and the country. The schools must continue to flourish and support the Government in breaking down the trend of racial polarisation in our schools today.

A school is not just stone and brick. It is the dedication of its teachers, its traditions and the respect and love it commands from its students. It is this tradition that joins all its students in breaking the barriers of race and religion.

In my speech, I dealt extensively with two important topics closest to my heart. First, I spoke on Vision 2020.

I pointed out that Vision 2020 should be accepted as the direction in which Malaysia is heading. Although the idea was mooted by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it is not just for him but for all Malaysians who aspire to make Malaysia a nation which can stand tall in the international community.

Malaysians should respond to the challenges of Vision 2020 and participate in nation-building.

We need to balance economic growth with social, moral and human development as the yardstick to growth is a balance between economic growth and moral well-being.

Parents concerned about the quality of family life must instill and impart basic moral values to their children.

Every peace-loving Malaysian should be fully committed to harmony and unity and relentless efforts must be made to promote a culture of peace, harmony and unity.

The Rukunegara is our guide to nation-building and should be respected by all as a shared vision for national unity. Its principles should always be upheld and practised for we must never take for granted the stability, peace and harmony we have attained so far.

The creation of a "Bangsa Malaysia" can only be achieved through relentless efforts by everyone beginning from the grass roots.

Malaysians must be prepared to reduce their sense of ethnicity in order to achieve "Bangsa Malaysia". Malaysians should start accepting each other as Malaysians regardless of race and religion and should not be

preoccupied with questions about ethnic origin.

Malaysians of all races must continue to work towards nurturing and strengthening the spirit of love and loyalty for the country.