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SPEECH BY THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AT VICTORIA INSTITUTION SPEECH DAY,
KUALA LUMPUR ON 10TH APRIL, 1962

Mr Headmaster¹, Members of the Board of Governors, Mr Vice-Chancellor, Your Excellencies, Honourable Ministers, Ladies and Gentlemen:

When I received the invitation to speak at this Prize-Giving and Speech Day Ceremony at the Victoria Institution I was very pleased for more reasons than one. One of the reasons is that it always gives me great pleasure to return to this field of education where for more than two years I was in the midst of what was then a real battle-field. It is gratifying to us all to see that there is now peace and quietness in this field and it is my hope and prayer that the various forces working in this field, instead of opposing each other will now devote their energies in harmony and goodwill for the true benefit and interest of our children, our people and our country.

The other reason for my accepting this invitation, apart from the fact that I have not attended a speech day here before is, that being a parent myself with four young sons, I naturally keep a close watch on any institution with such a high reputation such as the Victoria Institution. Dr Lewis has modestly referred to the fact that the Victoria Institution has the reputation of being the premier school in the Federation of Malaya, but he is not prepared to state whether this is true or not. I can assure him that, although it will be a number of years before I have to physically arrange for my sons to go to an outstanding school in Malaya, when the time comes, the Victoria Institution will certainly be on my short list. And I think I can fairly say that this is the opinion shared by many thousands of parents in this country.

Another reason why I am happy to come here today was that I might describe as simple human curiosity, because I had my educational grounding at another Institution which claims to be a premier school. Perhaps you may have heard of it—the Malay College, Kuala Kangsar. So I am not an old boy of the Victoria

¹ Dr G. E. D. Lewis.

Institution, and being an old boy of the Malay College, I very much appreciate the compliment you have paid me.

I might add that I have listened with the greatest interest to the remarkable record of achievement and activity recorded in the Headmaster's Report on the Victoria Institution. The V.I. success in all forms of examination last year is quite astonishing, and a great tribute to the efforts of both staff and students, and also I might say to the administrative enthusiasm of the Board of Governors.

Then added to this is the all-round interest in sport. After hearing that dozens and dozens of school teams take part in at least eleven sports, we are casually informed that the Institution has now added a new one—boxing. Judo enthusiasts are already catered for. It is quite evident to me, and to anyone else that the Victoria Institution is playing a premier part in school sports in Malaya.

As if its scholarship and sport were not sufficient for growing boys—and the girls who are here, too—we also learn that there are no less than twenty one different clubs and societies covering a great variety of subjects from music to mathematics, chess to commerce, and from stamps to outer space. As a parent I am often taken aback by the surprising and intelligent interest of the young generation in many aspects of modern life and never worried about in my younger days. So the Victoria Institution has provided me with a very good explanation of where all these awkward questions to parents come from.

Then again, as Minister of Defence, I am naturally very pleased to see the great interest taken by the boys in the Cadet Corps, the Air Training Corps, and the Boy Scouts.

So after listening to this revealing range of facts about life in Victoria Institution—even as an old boy of another Institution, I am quite prepared to be convinced that the V.I. has a pretty good claim, if they care to assert it, to being the premier school in Malaya. This, of course, does not mean that I should get involved in any argument about the comparative merits of the various Colleges and Institutions in this country. However, being attuned to the political winds, I foresee the time when the question of what is or is not the premier school in Malaya is likely to become a subject of perennial argument.

I think what pleases me most about the Victoria Institution, (and my remark applies equally to a considerable number of schools) is that here we have a microcosm of the new Malaya itself—many races working together in harmony and co-operation, tolerance and understanding, ambition and achievement. As long as we have schools in our country such as this, and the greater number of them the better, the youth of our nation is in good hands, and we will have no need to worry about the future quality of our civic, social and political leadership.

The Victoria Institution, like any other human concern, has its worries—the problems of finance, expansion, teaching staff. I note with special interest, because it is so fundamentally important to the progress of our national development, the particular attention paid by the Victoria Institution to the study of science, and the splendid record this school has shown in science examinations last year. The Headmaster is worried about the future, because the science staff is growing less without replacements in immediate sight. I can assure him and the Board of Governors, that I have taken due notice of this present difficulty, and will see what can be done about the matter. As you are aware, the development of secondary schools and all aspects of technical training throughout the Federation is one which our Government has given high priority in our educational policy.

To the boys of the Victoria Institution I would like to give a special message. To those who will be leaving to embark on their life careers, I would say that as long as you live up to the high standards of training and scholarship you have received here, as long as you observe the spirit of confidence and respect for yourselves and your fellowmen you have learned here, then you will always have a sure guide through life. Remember, however, that the years you have spent here are only the foundation, and on these foundations each of you must build the house of your future.

To those boys who are in mid-course of their school days, I would say that you should play your fullest part in the all-round life of the school, exercise the best of your ability in study, in sport and in creative activity. Always strive to find out the facts before passing judgement; always give your fellowmen the benefit of any doubt; always think well of one another and they will

think well of you. If we do these things, if you; act in this spirit, then your school days will be successful and you will make friends and store up memories that will last you all your life.

To those boys who are about to begin their careers in this school, I would say that even though you are very young indeed and you have much to learn, always remember that the best way to learn, the best way to please your families and your teachers and yourselves, is to study and to play with all your interest, to follow the example of those who are senior, and to determine that you will make the utmost of the opportunities you have. Your school days are golden moments, and although you may not think so now, those moments and school years will pass all too quickly by, so you must treasure every one of them.

To all the boys, those going, those staying and those coming, I would say—always honour and respect and serve your school in the same way as you honour and respect and serve God, Their Majesties and your country.

To the Board of Governors, the Headmaster, the Principal and the Teachers, I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my warmest appreciation of the invaluable work you have done in this splendid school, and to hope that the reputation of the Victoria Institution will always continue to stand at the highest peak of prestige in the Federation of Malaya.