

Speech of Datuk Hussein Onn,
Federal Minister of Education,
at the official opening ceremony
of St. Thomas's School New Junior
Secondary Building, Kuching,
Sarawak, on Monday, 12th March,
19 73 at 5.00 pm

Mr President,

Mr. Chairman and members of the Board
of Governors of St. Thomas's School.

Honourable Ministers.

His Grace The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury Dr.
Ramsey and Mrs. Ramsey.

The Principal and staff of the school.

Ladies and gentlemen.

I wish to thank the Chairman and members of the Board of Governors, the Principal and Staff of St. Thomas's School for the great honour in inviting me to officially open the new Junior Secondary School Block. As we have been told, the block is the third stage of the school building programme. It has nine classrooms, a library, two offices, a large staff room, toilet rooms, bicycle sheds and access driveway. The total cost is \$157,000, half of which has been contributed by the Government. The school is completing the last stage of its current building programme which is the complete renovation of the old main building. The total cost is \$70,000 of which \$23,000 are contributed by the Government. I am told that it will adequately provide accommodation for 500 senior

students, including 260 sixth formers. These achievements have been very commendable and to all concerned, may I congratulate them most sincerely.

2. The development of education, especially English education, in both East and West Malaysia, has been closely associated with Christian Mission schools. The country owes them a great debt of gratitude. In spite of changing times and conditions, they continue with their good work in providing education, unselfishly and with greater devotion and dedication. The Federal Government will continue to work with them and render whatever assistance possible.

3. St. Thomas's Secondary School is an Anglican school and is the oldest mission school in Sarawak. This year, the school, together with its sister school, St Mary's, is celebrating its 125th anniversary. I am sure that you all would like to join me in wishing them "A Very Happy Anniversary". For the occasion, we have here with us His Grace The Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Michael Ramsey. Your Grace, may I on behalf of the Federal Government, welcome you to Malaysia. In Malaysia, you are among friendly people and we trust that your visit, short though it may be, is a pleasant and memorable one. We are a young nation made up of diverse racial origins, religions and cultures. Out of diversity, we are determined to create unity, and God willing, we shall succeed.

4, This year, there are in Sarawak 1217 Government and Government-Aided primary schools with 157,500 pupils, and 58 Government and Government-Aided secondary schools with 30,270 students. Under the Second Malaysia Plan 1971-1975, a sum of \$42,37 million has been allocated for the further development and improvement of education in Sarawak out of which \$14,153 million have been allocated for this year. As regards operating expenses, a sum of \$ 37.158 million has been allocated for this year.

5. Over the years, we have spared neither efforts nor money to give the best possible education to the greatest number of our children. Our primary education is free and in time so will our secondary education be. Much has been done, especially in West Malaysia, to improve the standard of education, both primary and secondary. Much still has to be done. We are still faced with many difficulties, especially the shortage of trained science, mathematics and Bahasa Malaysia and English language teachers. These difficulties are to be expected which are primarily due to the rapid expansion of education. This year, there are in the whole of Malaysia about 1.822 million children in the primary schools and about 658,000 children in the secondary schools.

6. In West Malaysia, the salaries, terms and conditions of service and the general wellbeing of the teachers have been greatly improved. So will it be with teachers in Sarawak and Sabah. The Federal Education Ministry is finalising with the Sarawak and Sabah Governments the new salary schemes for teachers in these two states.

We are greatly concerned that the type and quality of education in schools in Sarawak are not catching fast enough with those in West Malaysia. There are many reasons for this of course. The recent action taken by the Sarawak Government

local councils is a wise step, and will no doubt bring about improvement in these schools. I am very glad to know that the Sarawak Government is aware of the desirability and necessity of converting the education system here to that of West Malaysia. In the interest of education in the state, I would suggest that it goes a step further and review the provisions in the Report of the Inter-Governmental Committee of Malaysia, 1962, with regard to education.

8. We would like Sarawak and Sabah to make use of and share all the educational facilities that we have in West Malaysia. We have had Educational Television Service in West Malaysia since last year. We are planning to extend this service to Sarawak and Sabah through the communications satellite.

9. I now have great pleasure in officially declaring open the new Junior Secondary Building.



No. Siri 532
No. Penerimaan 177/80

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