

Uchapan Y.B. Enche Hussein Onn, Menteri
Pelajaran di-Sekolah Rendah Methodist,
Petaling Jaya pada 11.11.70, jam 7 malam

It will be helpful and perhaps avoid misunderstanding if our people are, from time to time, inform of the fundamental principles, aims and functions of our educational system. It will be desirable also to inform our people from time to time of the tremendous progress which our country has made in the field of education since Independence. Nevertheless, we are not content with the progress made so far; we are striving and will go on striving for still further progress; we are striving and will go on striving to improve the quality and standard of education, the quality and standard of our teachers, the curricula, the methods of teaching etc.

Our Constitution makes education the responsibility of the Central Government and Parliament the legislative authority.

The right to education is one of the fundamental rights and so is the right of religious groups to maintain their sectarian schools.

It was only until the eve of our country's independence that the broad concept of the role of education in national development was first considered.

An Education Committee under the chairmanship of our present Prime Minister was set up. The Committee submitted its report in 1956. The main objective of this report was:-

to establish a national system of education acceptable to the people as a whole and which will satisfy their needs and promote their cultural, social, economic and political development as a nation, having regard to the intention to make Malay the national language of the country whilst preserving and sustaining the growth of the language and culture of other communities living in the country. This policy was first incorporated in the 1957 Education Ordinance. In order to secure the effective execution of this policy, provision is made in the new 1961 Education Act for the progressive development of an educational system in which the National Language is the main medium of instruction.

Our educational system, therefore, aims at:

- (i) providing general education for all, at least at the primary and lower secondary levels;

- (ii) nation-building, that is, uniting the various races together into a United Malaysian Nation;
- (iii) promoting cultural, social, economic and political development.

To give you some idea of the progress we have made since independence:

A. Total enrolment in all primary and sec. assisted schools in West Malaysia only.

1957	about	1,014,000
1970	about	1,900,000
1971 (projected)		2,000,000

An increase of about 1,000,000 since 1957.

- B. As regards primary education, of the total number of children in age group 6+ - 11+, 92% are in schools, of which 95% are males and 89% females.

C. Schools.

Primary	1970	-	4,365
Sec.	1970	-	750

No time to get figures for 1957.

D. Universities

1957	-	None	
1970	-	3	
		U. of Malaya	(7,000 student approx.)
		U. of Penang	(new)
		U. Kebangsaan	(new)

E. Expenditure - Annually Recurrent only:

1967	-	\$385 m.	(21.05% of National Budget)
1968	-	\$402 m.	(20.78% of " ")
1969	-	\$434 m.	(22.53% of " ")
1970	-	\$472 m.	(20.67% of " ")
1971	-	\$528 m.	(?)

Imbalance of educational facilities provided in rural and urban areas.

Even now, we often hear of complaint and dissatisfaction voiced by people in the rural areas that the urban areas always get the best of educational facilities whereas they always get the worst. I think this complaint is not unjustified.

I think we should make more and more efforts to provide additional, better and improved educational facilities for the rural areas. They need better teachers, more and better equipment, more secondary schools, more Form VI classes and more and better facilities and equipment for the teaching of science and technology.

The Teaching Profession.

The fact that we are facing a severe shortage of teachers - both in quantity and quality - is well-known to us all.

The shortage - both in quantity and quality - is particularly acute at the secondary school and college levels, especially in science, mathematics and technology.

The Education Ministry has been, is and will be making every effort to solve this rather stubborn problem.

And yet, while our country is wrestling with this problem, it is sad to hear that some of our teachers, who are citizens of our country, should be prepared to forsake her in her hour of need to work and serve in another country for a few extra pieces of gold and other dubious material gains.

The teaching profession is and has always been a respectable one.

What has made it low in the esteem of the people? I will not attempt to answer the question? Should not the teachers themselves answer it?

I will do all I can to assist the profession to recover its lost prestige and stature. If the teachers so wish, I will arrange to declare a day, a week or even a month as Teachers' Day, Week or Month.

Parent/Teacher Relationship

My responsibility is to provide facilities for the education of our children. Whether these facilities are fully made use of and whether our children get the education which is their birth right, will depend to a great extent not only on the teachers but on the parents as well.

It is very heartening to know that in our country, the urge and thirst for education and knowledge is spontaneous. Our primary education is free but we do not have to resort to making it compulsory. Indeed, we find it difficult to provide new schools and additional classes to accommodate new children every year who demand places in schools.

Parents who neglect to take an interest in the education of their children not only fail in their duty to their children but also fail in their duty towards their country. Our country needs informed and responsible citizens - those who can exercise their rights wisely and shoulder their obligations gladly and responsibly.

Education is the harmonious development of all our faculties. It begins in the nursery, and goes on at school, but does not end there.

It continues through life, whether we will or not. The only question is whether what we learn in after life is wisely chosen or picked up haphazard.

"Every person", says Gibbon, "has two educations, one which he receives from others, one more important, which he gives himself." What we teach ourselves must always be more useful than what we learn from others.

Nobody ever went far in knowledge, or became eminent in any of the services, by the discipline and restraint of a master.

Knowledge is power, Knowledge of the electric telegraph saves time; knowledge of writing saves human speech and locomotion; knowledge of domestic economy saves income; knowledge of sanitary laws saves health and life; knowledge of the laws of the intellect saves wear and tear of brain;

and knowledge of the laws of the Spirit - what does it not save.

Lastly, permit me to say something about our nation.

Byron said that

"A thousands years scarce serve
to form a state;
An hour may lay it in the dust."

He might be exaggerating a bit about the thousand years. But the destruction of a state in an hour, may well be true.

What happened on May 13th last year might well have been "the hour" which might have destroyed our country and our nation.

4. Ours is a young nation, It was in fact born on 13 years ago when we achieved our independence. In trying to build our nation, we have always been conscious of the immensity of the task before us and of the complexity of the problems of balancing the claims of the diverse races which make up our nation. We have never despaired. We have faith in our people; we have faith in their reasonableness, their common-sense and their good-will.

5. Our nation is indeed unique. It consists of people of different racial origins, of different religions and of different cultures which have a long history behind them.

Each of these racial groups has contributed and made our country what it is to-day - a beautiful, tolerant, organised and developed country.

No one racial group can claim that it has contributed more than the other racial groups towards the development and prosperity of this country. They are the results of the combined and sustained efforts of all the communities.

6. We aspire to a multi-racial society in which this very diversity can be an assets and a source of our nation's strength.

It is natural that because of our diversity, tensions should develop among us. These tensions arise out of our anxiety for our future and out of our fear of one another.

We tend to regard one another as enemies instead of as fellow-citizens; we tend to regard this country as a foreign country instead of OUR country to which we owe our undivided loyalty.

We also tend to be suspicious of one another; of one another's intentions, motives and actions.

A preacher once illustrated this in a homely and yet striking manner. He was out walking one day, he said, and on the opposite hill he became aware of a monstrous figure; as he approached he saw it was a man, and when he came up close, he found it was his brother.

7. Our nation has dedicated itself to certain ideals. I cannot do better than to repeat these ideals which are embodied in our Rukunegara. They are:-

- (i) the achievement of a greater unity of all her peoples;
- (ii) the maintenance of a democratic way of life;
- (iii) the creation of a just society in which the wealth of the nation shall be equitably shared;
- (iv) the ensuring of a liberal approach to her rich and diverse cultural traditions; and
- (v) the building of a progressive society which shall be oriented to modern service and technology.

8. Also in our Rukunegara, we, her people, have pledged our united efforts to attain these ideals guided by 5 principles, which are:-

- (i) Belief in God
- (ii) Loyalty to King and Country
- (iii) Upholding the Constitution
- (iv) Rule of Law
- (v) Good behaviour and morality.

9. We are striving to build a united Malaysian nation based on these ideals and these principles.

The road may be long, hard and perilous. There may be many obstacles. There may be set-backs.

Nevertheless, we are determined to forge ahead, whatever may be the cost; whatever may be the toils, sweats and tears, until in God's own good time we succeed.

10. Shall we fail our nation in her greatest hour of need?

Shall we be indifferent to our nation's fate?

Shall we do nothing and contribute nothing for and to our country?

Whatever our nation survives or perishes will depend on us - her citizens.

We all have some voice in the Government of our country. Our duty then is to fit ourselves and our children for the exercise of this right and for the shouldering of responsibilities and obligations which go with this right. We cannot claim our

rights as citizens without at the same time prepared to shoulder our responsibilities and obligations.

11. Our nation has weathered a violent storm. It has recovered its balance and to some extent its confidence.

But the problems created by prejudice, anxiety and fear are still there. A new generation is coming up and with it the aspiration of new national value and priorities. There is a revolution of rising expectations of the people. These are some of our nation's problems. They must be faced and they must be resolved.

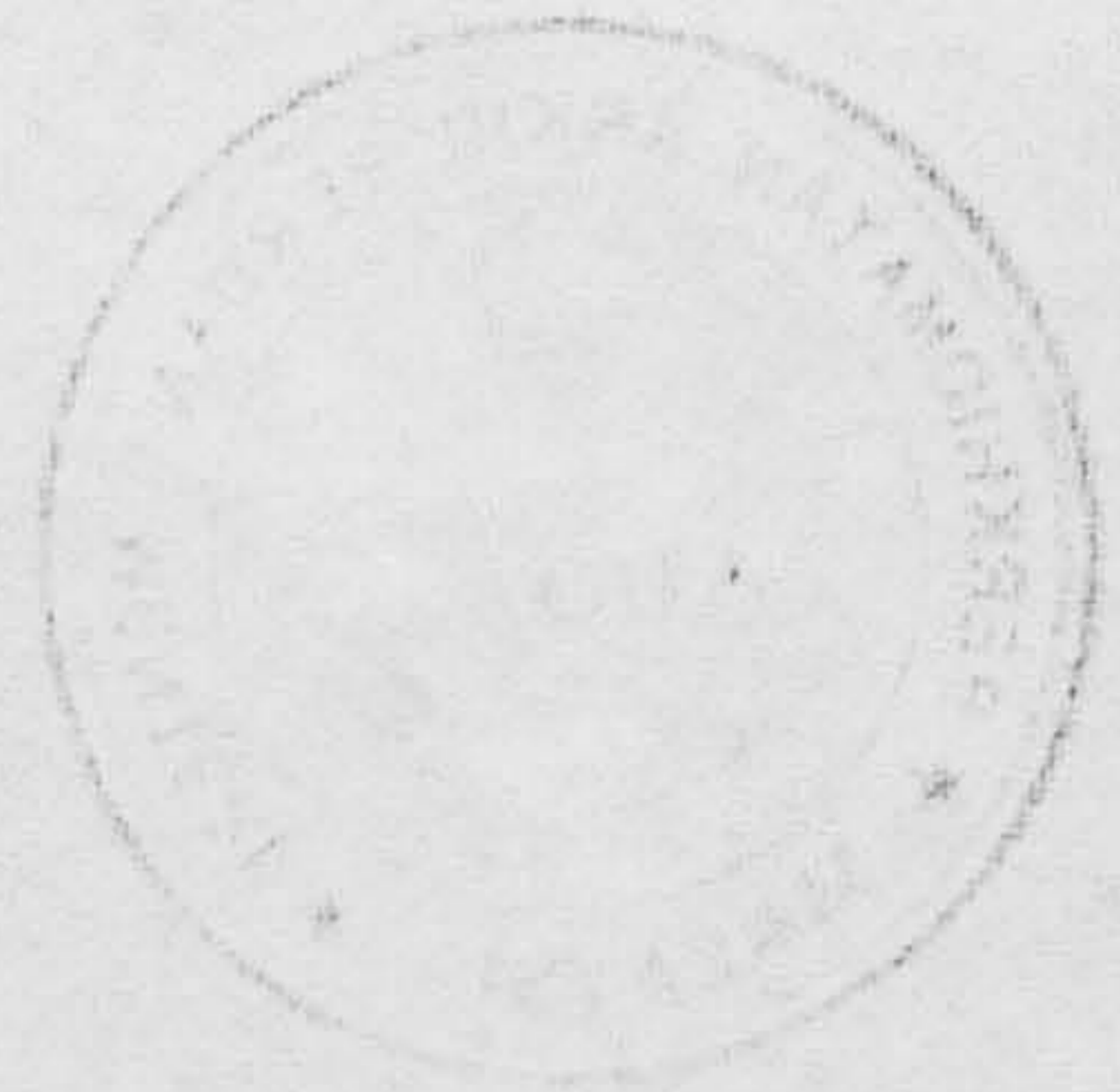
12. Let us then dedicate ourselves to the task of building a united nation.

Let us strive for greater unity among our fellow-citizens.

Let us strive for harmony and goodwill, for it is more difficult to restore harmony and goodwill than to sow dissension.

Let us plant in ourselves, our children and our children's children, the seeds of service and dedication to our country; the seeds of love, pride and loyalty to our country.

And lastly, let us be further guided in our conduct, speech and action by the principle that the interests of our country and the welfare of the people as a whole, come first, always and everytime.



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