

Address by the Hon'ble Minister,
Enche Hussein Onn, Minister of
Education, Malaysia, on Monday,
29th November 1971 at the Opening
Ceremony of the Unesco Regional
Seminar on Production Planning &
Distribution of Text and General
Books in Asia at the Dewan Bahasa
dan Pustaka at 10.30 am.

I extend a warm welcome to all participants
in this "Seminar on Production Planning
and Distribution of General and Text Books
in Asia". Participants from a number of
countries in Asia are taking part. This
seminar is organised by UNESCO through its
Regional Centre for Book Development at
Karachi, Pakistan. I wish to thank UNESCO
and its said Regional Centre for organising it.
I also wish to thank the Book Publishers
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1. On behalf of the Government of Malaysia,
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I also wish to thank the Book Publishers
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kind co-operation in the preparation of this seminar.

2. The year 1972 has been declared by UNESCO as the International Book year. It is, therefore, appropriate and timely that this seminar is being held. Among others, it will give the participants the opportunity:-

- (a) to exchange views concerning the book industry;
- (b) to understand better with regard to book production, planning and distribution.

(c) to review the problems facing the book industry and to find solutions thereto;

Further, this seminar I trust will generate activities to be carried out henceforth and in the years to come.

3. Malaysia has thought out a number of plans to celebrate the International Book year. One of them is the holding of a seminar on the subject of "Cultivating the Reading Habit". The Malaysian Book Publishers Association has also made plans to celebrate the International Book year. They include the publication of "Books Malaysia" which is a journal dealing with the book industry. The Association has set aside

(4)

a month as a "book month" during which period ~~an~~ extensive book exhibitions will be held throughout the country. This will be done in co-operation with the Malaysian Booksellers Association and the Library Association of Malaysia.

4. Malaysia is developing her library services. The National Library was established early this year. Under our Second Development Plan, a sum of 17½2.5 has been allocated for its permanent building which will be sited in the Lake Garden near the National Museum. Its present building at Venning Road is a temporary one and is open to the public as a reference library. Next year

(5)

more books and staff will be acquired.
Appeals will be made to the public for
donations to the National Library Fund.
Since our Independence, the demand for
education and the thirst for knowledge
have been so phenomenal that we ^{are} very
confident that the National Library will
be fully made use of by our people.

respect, I appeal to the public to respond generously when they receive requests for donations as well as that they use the facilities provided by the National Library to the utmost.

5. Books are an indispensable instrument for learning. They are:-

- (a) one of the major means of communication, *and*
- (b) a vital repository of information in subjects like arts, science and technology, as well as history and culture.

In spite of the development of ^{the} mass media, such as radio and television, books will continue to play their important ^{sole} ~~part~~ in the dissemination of knowledge. Books will continue to be one of the factors for ^{accelerating} ~~expediting~~ development and modernisation of nations. ^{Therefore} ~~As such~~, the books that ^{we} ~~you~~ plan, develop, design and edit, will be intimately linked with the efforts to promote rapid economic and social progress. Books will continue to be an important tool through which the people can develop the knowledge and skill required to accelerate effectively the process of national growth. Books are ~~playing an~~

indispensable ~~role~~ in education development.

6. Many ^{things} ~~ingredients~~ are required to make education a complete whole. By far the most important is the production of proper and suitable textbooks. The cost of textbooks must be within the reach of every income ^{group} ~~bracket~~. The Malaysian Government has been spending ^{about} ~~in the region~~ of M\$1.2 million annually to meet the needs of textbooks for school children in the rural areas.

At best, this effort can only be regarded as an expedient.

A more practical and permanent solution has to be found.

^{Am sure that} I ~~hope~~ this Seminar will seriously consider ways and means of reducing the cost of textbooks. Book production today is an important industry. Reading habits are being cultivated and spread. In the production of textbooks and general books, certain costs ^{are inevitable} ~~have to be accepted~~ ^{such as} ~~as they are:-~~

- ^{the high} ~~(a)~~ Cost of materials ^{and equipment.} ~~may be on the increase;~~
- ~~(b)~~ Cost of equipment is also high.

However, there are other areas which ^{should seriously} ~~could be explored~~ ^{discussed by this seminar} ~~with the~~ ^{the} view to lowering the cost of textbooks. For example:-

- (a) Cost of labour could be reduced by increased efficiency.
- (b) ~~Books with~~ Soft covers are cheaper than those with hard ^{ones} covers.
- (c) ~~Costs of production of books with less illustrations and~~ Using less colours. ~~could be slightly cheaper.~~
- (d) International and/or regional co-operation in making blocks for illustrations of textbooks for co-operative use ^{should} ~~would~~ reduce the costs of production.

~~You may wish to discuss these topics further at the Seminar with the view of reducing the costs of textbooks.~~

7. I understand ^{that} successful experiments have been carried out in Tanzania to reduce the costs of textbooks. ^{I also understand} ~~It has been made known to me~~ that in Indonesia, they have ^{adopted} ~~embarked on~~ a method of textbook production which has lowered the costs of textbooks considerably. ^{For} ~~As an~~ example, the mathematics textbook containing 104 pages for a second grader in the primary school, costs ^{about} ~~in the~~ ^{Malaysian} ~~region of~~ 24 cents. ~~in Malaysian money.~~ If this Seminar

succeeds in suggesting ways and means of
~~achieves in some substantial measure the objective of~~
it will have done
reducing the costs of textbooks, ~~the participants who~~
a great service to the people not only of Malaya but
are here today would certainly earn the undying gratitude
also to those in the other Asian countries.
~~of parents particularly those in the rural areas. The~~
will, without doubt,
reduction of the costs of textbooks ~~could contribute in~~
solve ~~which has and is preventing~~
still
~~solving one of the great problems confronting the spread~~
and expansion of education. However, I would like to
throw just a word of caution. Reduction of the costs of
textbooks should not be at the expense of the life of the
textbooks. In this country we would like to have textbooks
that will last for 3 years so if the reduction of costs
means the shortening of the life of the textbooks, efforts
in this direction would be regarded as false economy.

8. ~~From the title of the Seminar, I know that a~~
This seminar will also be discussing book distribution.
~~large part of your time will be devoted to the question~~
have
~~of book distribution. We are attempting to provide~~
education for all. We *have* ~~want~~ to provide equal educational
have both children ~~opportunities for pupils~~ *as well as the* in the rural ~~and~~ urban areas.
therefore, extremely
The question of book distribution is ~~an~~ *an* important one *as well.*
I am indeed happy that this aspect will be discussed at
this Seminar.

9. Books must reach the rural areas where most ~~ignorant and~~ *of the population are ignorant and illiterate.* of the ~~illiterates~~ are. For many years in the past ~~Malaysia, for example, in view of her multi-racial society,~~ as well as for many more years to come, we are engaged ~~has the vital and difficult task of building a united~~ in turning illiterates into functional literates and ~~Malaysian nation.~~ *By means of books, no less by other means,* training them to become useful citizens with the necessary ~~that we hope to eradicate ignorance, emotional superstition,~~ knowledge and skill. These people are eager to learn ~~prejudices, doubts and fears and thereby achieve our ultimate~~ and ability to read would in the long run open their ~~objective of national unity among our people.~~ minds to recognise not only their rights but also their responsibilities. Adequate and suitable reading materials must therefore reach these people.

10. We have now reached a period in the development of education in our respective countries when we need more books. In Malaysia, we need more books in the Malaysian language written by authors who take pride in ~~developing~~ *whose* ideas ~~consistent with~~ *are* ~~the~~ *our national* aims and aspirations of developing nations. I know and I appreciate that ~~these~~ the aims I have expressed cannot be accomplished overnight. ~~Neither can it be accomplished with ease.~~ *However, I hope I have made my point of the* ~~with regard to the vital role which the book industry~~ However, I sincerely hope that I have been successful ~~is playing and will continue to play.~~ in some measure in stressing to you all, that as people in the book industry, you have a vital role to play.

11. This seminar will last for three weeks
— from to-day till 18 December. I wish you
all success in your deliberations. It is with
great pleasure then that I declare this
seminar open.



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