

Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel: 328191 ext.352,353,354 / 362207 / 362271.

National Archives and
Records Centre, Singapore.
04-3/80/02/26

1 MAR 1980
ACC. No. NARC

80 0026 174

SPEECH BY DR OH CHIN HOCK, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (CULTURE),
AT THE PRIZE PRESENTATION CEREMONY FOR THE WINNERS OF THE
LOGO DESIGN COMPETITION AT THE CHINESE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
CONFERENCE ROOM, ON TUESDAY, 25 FEB 80 AT 2.00 PM

It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon to award prizes to the winners of the logo design competition. Since the results were announced last month, the winning logo has become a familiar sight to many, keeping the Mandarin-speaking message very much alive. This competition, together with other competitions held in connection with the Promote the Use of Mandarin Campaign, is part of the national publicity to help our people understand the significance, scope and objectives of the campaign. As a result, the initial fear, anxiety and misgivings among many English-educated Chinese concerning the campaign have been largely removed, particularly after the two TV forums given by the Prime Minister recently. Only a few are still sceptical.

But publicity alone, however, cannot achieve the main objective of the campaign, which is to make Mandarin the common language of communication among the Chinese. This can only materialize with the creation of a Mandarin-speaking environment for Chinese Singaporeans - at home, in the markets, hawker centres and shops. Efforts should now focus on the learning and speaking of Mandarin. Hence, the Mandarin classes being run by the Ministry of Culture, statutory boards, the NTUC, and the People's Association. In terms of statistics, some 3,300 civil servants are attending Mandarin classes at 23 centres thrice weekly while at the People's Association's 47 community centres, 51 Mandarin classes have been or will be organised for over 300 participants.

.../?

2

As far as the Mandarin course for civil servants is concerned, the results have been more than satisfactory. A recent survey shows that the majority of the participants were highly motivated, adopting a positive attitude towards the course. A questionnaire survey on attitudes and expectations conducted on 1,703 participants in 62 Mandarin classes (or 56% of the total participants) reveals that 35% were pleased to attend the course while about 75% felt that the course was useful to them. In fact, the response to such courses has been very encouraging; even to date, the Ministry of Culture still receives requests from the various ministries for the enrolment of their officers. In view of this, my Ministry will approach the Ministry of Finance to consider increasing the number of these classes.

In planning Mandarin courses in the future, we will take into consideration some of the observations we made on the present course participants. A pre-course evaluation of the Mandarin proficiency of a random sample of 457 officers, shows that many of them had no difficulty in listening and understanding Mandarin. In fact, some of them had had a few years of Chinese education. The emphasis should therefore be on encouraging the participants to speak and practise the language as often as possible in order to attain confidence and fluency and correct usage of words, phrases and expressions.

The enthusiasm shown by these officers towards the learning of Mandarin and the good response to the Mandarin classes at community centres show that many English-educated have been convinced of the usefulness and importance of the language.

Another target group of Chinese Singaporeans yet to be won over are the less-educated ones such as hawkers, stallholders and shop assistants. Despite their support for the campaign, they still tend to

use dialects in the hawker centres and shops. The reason is not ignorance of Mandarin but a deeply ingrained speech habit. More efforts must therefore be channeled towards this direction. In fact in a speech earlier this month, I urged the hawkers to organize Mandarin classes with the help of perhaps, the Environment Ministry and the Housing Board. Towards this common objective, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry, which is one of the organizers of the campaign, can also play a big role in urging the trade and clan associations to run Mandarin classes for their members.

No national campaign, especially one involving so sensitive an issue as language, can be launched without some misconception and apprehension in some quarters. You will recall the strong reaction among some sections of the Chinese population against the decision of the then RTS to dub popular Cantonese TV serials into Mandarin. Many reasons were expounded, such as lack of *flavour* ~~fervour~~, excitement, authenticity, etc. But all proved to be unfounded. There are indications that more people now are enjoying the serial, "Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre", which as the first Cantonese serial to be dubbed had caused the controversy. According to the latest SRS survey, conducted over a six-week period, the Mandarin version of this serial is now enjoyed by 922,000 viewers, as compared with 826,000 viewers for the last two episodes of the Cantonese serial "The Romantic Swordsman" and the first four episodes of the Mandarin version of "Heaven Sword and Dragon Sabre" over a previous six-week period. This is proof that viewers value the quality of a production, not the language used. After some initial resistance, Chinese Singaporeans are now enjoying the dubbed programmes.

Another controversial issue associated with the Mandarin campaign was the use of Hanyu Pinyin for the naming of the new-borns in birth-certificates. Since we are now making great efforts towards the day

when Mandarin will be widely used among the Chinese Singaporeans in our society, it is only logical to standardize the spelling of Chinese names and business names in the long-run. However, as Hanyu Pinyin is a completely new way of spelling Chinese names, standardization is to be implemented only when people are more familiar with the system. In the meantime, however, parents who choose to use Hanyu Pinyin for their children's names may do so at the Registry of Births and Deaths where there is a guide on surnames in Hanyu Pinyin for reference. Efforts have been made to popularise the use of Hanyu Pinyin. The SBC will soon broadcast and telecast a 13-week course on Hanyu Pinyin for those who are interested in learning the system. But due to the legal and social complications involved in the Hanyu Pinyin of Chinese surnames, it may be better, as a first step, for the business sector and clan associations to adopt the use of Hanyu Pinyin. The Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry could play a role in this respect.

Finally, I would like to commend the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry for having contributed so much towards the promotion of the Speak Mandarin Campaign. The Logo Design Competition is just one of the many examples of its support and efforts. However, as the campaign's objective involves a long-term process, success can only be ensured through sustained effort, and I have no doubt that it will continue to join in the national effort to work towards the emergence of a Mandarin-speaking environment for Chinese Singaporeans.

My congratulations, too, to the winners of the Logo Design Competition.