

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed for release on July 4, 2011, 11am

Speak Mandarin Campaign 2011 kicks off to Keep Mandarin Alive

4 July 2011 - The 32nd Speak Mandarin Campaign was officially launched by Guest-of-Honour, Minister for Transport and Second Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Lui Tuck Yew earlier this morning at the Asian Civilisations Museum.

Speaking at the launch as the newly appointed Chairman of the Promote Mandarin Council, Mr Seow Choke Meng said that the key to learning a language is to constantly use it, and frequently using Mandarin will also help to create a conducive environment for mastering the language. With this objective in mind, the Promote Mandarin Council is introducing a new tagline – “**华文华语 多用就可以**” (Mandarin. It gets better with use.) to remind Singaporeans to continuously learn and gain competency in Mandarin by actively using the language.

Theme Song Contest

One of the new initiatives that will be launched this year is the Speak Mandarin Campaign Theme Song Contest. The Contest aims to encourage Chinese Singaporeans to explore and express the beauty of the Chinese language and culture.

Schools can also actively participate by encouraging their students to take part, to use the Chinese they are learning in a fun way.

Winners will be offered guidance and masterclasses by some of Singapore’s most successful lyricists and composers. This initiative will also contribute to the Singapore music industry as it facilitates young talents to be nurtured by successful music industry professionals.

The Chinese Challenge

With China's continued emergence as a key player in the world economy, it will be a great advantage if our young people are nurtured beyond what students study in school. This year, The Chinese Challenge is turning its focus fully on students. The Chinese Challenge will have questions ranging from Chinese culture to pop culture, general knowledge ranging from key events in Chinese history and significant literary works to common terms used in today's world. Students will answer ten questions each week from 4 July to 14 August, and stand a chance to win attractive prizes. Six finalists will be chosen among the top scorers to compete for the Grand Prize in The Chinese Challenge Grand Finals, scheduled to be aired on Channel 8 in September 2011.

Short Video Clip Competition

Another initiative for students is the Short Video Clip Competition which will take place in 2012. Through this initiative, students will be able to share the colour, sound, breadth and depth of Chinese language and culture the way they see it through their camera lenses.

The intention of the Promote Mandarin Council in creating these activities is to help change the perception of Mandarin as a "second language" to Mandarin as a language for our daily communication.

Parents play an equally large part in cultivating an interest in Chinese language and culture in their children. Addressing the audience at the opening ceremony, Minister Lui urged parents who are able to converse in Mandarin to set an example for their children by making Mandarin a language of communication at home.

Thanking the partners at the launch, Mr Seow said that the campaign this year "would create synergy, pool creative resources together and achieve greater depth in promoting the language as well as cultivating an appreciation of Chinese culture in Chinese communities". The Chairman also called on the business community to play their part in

promoting Mandarin as well as in cultivating bilingual and bicultural Singaporeans. He said that it was encouraging to see that Singapore's efforts to promote Mandarin have been paying off. Most Chinese Singaporeans would have undergone a bilingual education and are able to speak and are literate in Mandarin. Mr Seow extended his invitation for all to support the Promote Mandarin Council in its efforts to promote Mandarin, and urged all Chinese Singaporeans to leverage on their foundation and use Mandarin frequently to keep the language alive in our community.

- end -

About Speak Mandarin Campaign 2011

This year marks the 32nd anniversary of this nationwide campaign that was first launched in 1979 by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. The objective then was to encourage Chinese Singaporeans to use Mandarin instead of dialects. Over the years, the campaign has shifted its focus to encourage Chinese Singaporeans to both embrace speaking Mandarin and enjoy an appreciation for Chinese culture and language.