

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT THARMAN SHANMUGARATNAM
AT THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF BULAN BAHASA 2024
ON SATURDAY, 7 SEPTEMBER 2024**

1. Salam sejahtera para hadirin sekalian. Saya amat berbesar hati dapat bersama anda pada hari ini untuk Majlis Pelancaran Bulan Bahasa. Bulan Bahasa ialah sebuah sambutan tahunan di mana kita meraikan bahasa, sastera dan budaya Melayu.
2. Tahun ini, tumpuan diberikan kepada belia kita. Ini mengingatkan kita tentang minat, kreativiti dan tenaga para belia kita. Mereka merupakan kunci untuk mempromosikan dan melestarikan bahasa dan budaya Melayu. Tahniah kepada Majlis Bahasa Melayu Singapura atas usaha mereka untuk terus melibatkan belia melalui inisiatif seperti Rakan Bahasa dan Sahabat Sastera.
3. Seterusnya, izinkan saya menyampaikan ucapan saya dalam bahasa Inggeris.
4. Our mother tongue languages are inseparable from what makes us Singaporean.
 - a. English is the common language in our multicultural society, and has been an essential currency for a city state that is plugged into virtually every corner of the world.
 - b. However, it is our mother tongues that connect us to our heritage and our values, and part of what makes the Singapore identity rich and multi-

faceted. They give us confidence in who we are, and our place in a rapidly-changing world.

- c. They also allow us to engage with people and cultures across Asia, with economic benefits that have grown with the region's rise. In particular, Singapore is located amidst more than 290 million people who speak bahasa Melayu or bahasa Indonesia. Speaking the language provides a door to growing opportunities around us.
5. It turns out, too, that bilingualism has broader benefits for the mind. Some studies have shown that children who learn two languages are better at juggling between different tasks, and in their soft skills. And even for adults, frequent speaking of more than one language may be of benefit, by delaying the ageing of the brain. In short, bilingualism is good for all of us.
 6. Importantly, languages cannot only be learnt and practised in schools. Our mother tongue languages must be living languages, that we use in daily life, so that they remain alive and relatable to future generations.
 7. This is why I hope that you, your families, friends and loved ones, can participate in the activities lined up for this year's Bulan Bahasa, which actually runs for about two months until mid-October.
 8. Let's continue to impart the gift of languages to every new generation, and help them experience the intrinsic satisfaction of using the mother tongue in their lives. With your support and creative efforts, we can be sure that the Malay

language and culture will continue to be a vibrant thread in Singapore's multicultural fabric.

9. Allow me to end with a pantun.

Bunga mawar di atas batu,
Bersama dengan bunga melati;
Mari hidupkan bahasa Melayu,
Semoga ia kekal dilestari.

Terima kasih.