

PRESS RELEASE

18 OCT 1986

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 0617 · Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

Release No: 01/OCT
03-3/86/10/02

86-HKL-17

**SPEECH BY MR HO KAH LEONG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(COMMUNICATIONS & INFORMATION), AT THE LAUNCHING CEREMONY
FOR 1986 SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN AT THE SINGAPORE CONFERENCE
HALL ON THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER 1986 AT 8.00 PM**

Let me first extend my warm welcome and heartfelt thanks to all of you who are here this evening for the Launching Ceremony for the 1986 Speak Mandarin Campaign. In particular, I wish to thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence, Mr Goh Chok Tong, for setting aside his valuable time to perform the launching ceremony.

The Speak Mandarin Campaign has entered its seventh year. More and more people can speak Mandarin today. But not all people who can speak Mandarin make it a point to speak it. This is a matter of habit. This year's campaign will concentrate on getting people to take the initiative to speak in Mandarin, instead of waiting for the other party to start with. If all Chinese Singaporeans will make it a point to speak Mandarin to one another, I trust that they will gradually drop their habit of speaking dialects among themselves.

A language has to be widely used for it to remain dynamic. Mandarin is spoken by a quarter of mankind, and is one of the official languages of the United Nations. It will never become a dead language. In Singapore, two recent developments are very helpful in the promotion of Mandarin. They are the rapid development of "xiang sheng" (cross talk) and "xin yao" (Singapore ballads) over the last couple of years. "Xiang sheng" is an oral art of entertainment conducted mostly in Mandarin. Performers must possess oratorical, phonetic and speaking skills. Technically speaking, "xiang sheng" can be performed in any language. In Singapore, however, it is almost always in Mandarin.

"Xin yao" are the songs composed and sung by young people. The songs, sung in Mandarin, express the feelings of young people and are becoming increasingly popular. "Xiang sheng" and "xin yao" should be encouraged and promoted. They reinforce the Speak Mandarin Campaign. They certainly deserve a place in the Chinese culture. Tonight, we shall be able to enjoy some interesting performances of "xiang sheng" and "xin yao".

Your effort and contribution to the promotion of Mandarin over the years have made the campaign a splendid success. I am thankful to all of you and hope that you will keep up the good work so that Mandarin will become a habitual spoken language among the Chinese Singaporeans.

We have chosen the Chinese food and drinks establishments and their Chinese patrons as the target groups for this year's Campaign. These establishments will be playing an active part in promoting the use of Mandarin within their sector. We would like to thank the joint working committee and others involved in organising the launching ceremony. The committee comprised the Food, Drinks and Allied Workers Union, the Singapore Restaurant Merchants Association, the Restaurant Association of Singapore, the Singapore Restaurant Owners' Association, the Singapore Foochow Coffee Restaurant and Bar Merchants Association, the Kheng Keow Coffee Merchants Restuarant and Bar Owners Association, the Housing and Development Board and the Ministry of the Environment.

The Singapore News and Publications Ltd will be sponsoring weekend performances by "xiang sheng" and "xin yao" artists at the major hawker centres during the Campaign Month. The Malaysia Dairy Industries (Pte) Ltd has printed our campaign slogan and logo on their packet chrysanthemum drinks to spread the message. To them I would also like to express my deep gratitude.

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