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**SPEECH BY MR GAN KIM YONG, MINISTER FOR MANPOWER
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE
SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN 2010
TUESDAY 6 JULY, 11.20 AM, ASIAN CIVILISATIONS MUSEUM**

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, I am very glad to be here today at the launch of the Speak Mandarin Campaign 2010. As the Speak Mandarin Campaign enters into its 31st year, it is gratifying to see that many Singaporeans now appreciate the importance of the ability to speak Mandarin in addition to English, especially with China continuing to gain importance in the international stage economically and politically.

The rising importance of Mandarin

2 We are fortunate that we had instituted a bilingual education policy and we are now reaping the benefits. Today, 56% of Singapore residents are literate in more than one language¹.

3 Countries like India, America and Europe are recognizing the rising importance of China and are stepping up their presence in the Chinese market. Likewise, the Chinese too are venturing into international markets where English is the language of business. This puts Singapore

¹ [Census of Population 2000 Statistical Release 2: Education, Language and Religion](#)

at a very advantageous position with our bilingual ability. Today, many Singaporeans are able to leverage on our bilingual and bicultural edge to take advantage of the opportunities that present themselves in China. The ability to be effectively bilingual is no longer merely a national education requirement. It is now a life skill that we should all make an effort to acquire.

Fostering the learning of Mandarin

4 To use the language proficiently, one needs to embrace Mandarin as a living language and take an interest in the Chinese culture. Research has shown that human beings generally acquire language skills more easily before they reach the age of five. Therefore, the key is to start young. To ensure that our children develop an interest in Mandarin, each of us has the responsibility to show that learning Mandarin is not just about opening the window to the rich traditional culture, history, and philosophy accumulated over thousands of years, but also about making it relevant today, and encouraging them to acquaint themselves with a culture that is growing in its influence in the modern world.

5 Teachers today use many innovative ways to kindle the interest for the Chinese language in our children. Parents too play an equally important role in encouraging their children to learn Chinese with interest and curiosity. Bilingual parents can create a conducive environment at home for their children by associating Chinese with fun activities. Those who are not bilingual can take the opportunity to bond with their children by learning the language together. When used as a living language at

home and during play, the language will come alive and become a part of our life.

6 I have heard many anecdotes of people learning Mandarin by watching Chinese movies, Chinese serials on TV, and listening to Chinese radio programmes. These are fun ways to get the ear familiar with the sound and structure of the Chinese language. One can also start with small steps by reading short articles in newspapers or magazines. In Singapore, we have the bilingual radio station FM 883 and the bilingual newspaper MyPaper. Both serve as a good bridge to get Singaporeans started on the reading of Chinese newspapers.

Launch of Speak Mandarin Campaign 2010

7 Today marks the launch of this year's Speak Mandarin Campaign as well as the launch of The Chinese Challenge, 《华文? 谁怕谁! 》. Launched for the first time last year, the Chinese Challenge is the key initiative of the Speak Mandarin Campaign 2010 as well. It is a good example of an interactive activity for the whole family, especially because the online contest covers a wide variety of very interesting topics and quizzes.

8 This year, I am happy to announce that The Chinese Challenge is bringing us a step further by adding a 'Student Category'. This comes with quiz content tweaked to specially suit the interests and needs of students, which I believe will help the campaign reach out to more of them. The Speak Mandarin Campaign also continues to work with partners to provide activities and programmes that cater to families and individuals of different proficiency levels, engaging them.

9 我们都很熟悉孔子所说的“学而时习之，不亦悦乎”。能够有机会学习，并且将所学的知识运用在生活之中，那确实是值得感到高兴的事。只要以好学的心态去看待华语及中华文化，并采取积极的态度，尽量在生活之中运用华文华语，肯定能够体会到其中的乐趣。《华文？谁怕谁！》提供了一个宜游戏利学习的平台，学而赢奖之，不亦乐乎也？

[Note: Translation for Media's information. Not to be read] We are all familiar with the Confucius saying "Applying what you learn is of great joy". Having the opportunity to learn and apply what we learn in our daily lives is something to be happy about. As long as we maintain a thirst for knowledge and an enthusiastic attitude towards the Chinese culture, we will be able to discover the joy in learning and applying the Chinese language in our lives. The Chinese Challenge 2010 "Chinese? Who is afraid of whom?" provides a platform for us to learn Chinese through playing games, isn't that great?

Conclusion

10 I encourage all Singaporeans to develop a curiosity to delve deeper into the Chinese language and culture, learn Mandarin and have fun with Mandarin in their lives. It is my hope that more and more Singaporeans will take up The Chinese Challenge in the coming days. 接受《华文？谁怕谁！》的挑战。

For online reference
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Thank you.