

Embargoed until 17 March 2009, 5.00pm

NEWS RELEASE

Speak Mandarin Campaign celebrates its 30th Anniversary

Singapore, 17 March 2009 – The Speak Mandarin Campaign marks a major milestone as it celebrates its 30th Anniversary this year. The founder of this nationwide campaign Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew was the guest of honour at the launch event held this evening at the NTUC Auditorium.

The Speak Mandarin Campaign has come a long way since its inception by then Prime Minister Lee in 1979. It was launched to promote a common mother-tongue language and social cohesion within the Chinese community.

Over the past three decades, the Speak Mandarin Campaign has succeeded in promoting the wider use of Mandarin, bringing the language to people through exciting events and activities. Its core objective remains the same today - to encourage Singaporeans to use the Chinese language in their daily lives, and to be effectively bilingual.

This year, the Speak Mandarin Campaign unveils a new chapter as the Promote Mandarin Council turns its focus on encouraging and supporting Chinese Singaporeans and Permanent Residents to be effectively bilingual and bicultural. This will be done through a nationwide initiative that aims to deepen their appreciation of Chinese culture and grow their competency level in communicating in Mandarin.

Ms Lim Sau Hoong, Chairperson of the Promote Mandarin Council, said: “The Chinese language is one of the richest and most vibrant living languages. The Promote Mandarin Council recognises that for the next phase of the Speak Mandarin Campaign, we have to move beyond the learning of the language to also embrace the cultural aspect. It is only then that we can equip our target audience to be both effectively bilingual and bicultural.”

Ms Lim, who is also the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Creative Director of local advertising firm 10AM Communications, is the creative mind behind the advertising campaign. By showcasing children of different nationalities from all over the world speaking the Chinese language, the new television advertisements aim to inspire the learning and appreciation of the Chinese

language and culture. They will be broadcast on Channels 5 and 8 starting 17 March.

In a showcase of local talent in Chinese culture, guests were treated to a classical “*kuai ban*” (快板) performance by six students from the Practice Performing Arts School. Three popular songs composed by famous local Chinese composer, Liang Wern Fu, were also performed during the launch by local singers Joanna Dong, Lim Shieh Yi and Sing Chew.

This year sees the Speak Mandarin Campaign 2009 collaborating with community partners to develop activities and programmes that promote the use of Mandarin. Some community partnership programmes include a series of talks titled *Yang Sheng – The Chinese Way to Wellness*, the Story Challenge 2009 with The Theatre Practice, the Mandarin Speaking Award 2009 with YMCA, and the Inter-School Group Storytelling Competition with Hwa Chong Institution.

Publicity outreach events will also be held from April onwards to reach out to Singaporeans from all walks of life.

- end -

About the Speak Mandarin Campaign 2009

This year marks the 30th 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.