

2007 Official Launch of the Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC)

Monday 5 November 2007, 3.00pm

The Cage @ Kallang

Speech by Mr Kenneth Tan

Chairperson, Promote Mandarin Council

Good afternoon, Minister Lim Swee Say, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. A very warm welcome to the 28th official launch of the Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC).

My years on the Promote Mandarin Council have been a pleasure for me. Finding the ways of promoting speaking Mandarin as a lifestyle choice has been like watching a child grow up, develop character and spirit and having a life of its own. The SMC has grown with the times and has responded to the changing needs of Singapore society. Every year, we ask ourselves the questions, 'What do people want this year? What are they looking for?' and 'How can we capture their changing tastes?'

What I am particularly happy about and proud of is the increasing number of partners that have come onboard. It is a sign that people can see what we are doing and believe in the Speak Mandarin Campaign. Our partners are the life of the SMC and deserve special mention.

This year, StarHub has come onboard and will broadcast SMC material on selected channels and even offer downloads of the *SMC Theme Song* and *Singapore Soccer Rap* you have just heard. NTUC Youth will also Partner SMC to promote fun activities to their members and on its website. Our faithful advocates in the media - Comfort Delgro, Capital 958, 938Live, Lianhe Zaobao/My Paper, SMRT, The Straits Times and STOMP! - continue to stand with us in our mission to promote the speaking of Mandarin. So look out for the cool and hip buses, banners and posters that will soon be making their way around our island. Golden Village's Chinese Film Festival this year will feature the works of New Generation filmmakers.

2008 is a good year for travel and our new partner, Wotif.com, a one-stop travel website is collaborating with Jetstar and Days Inn China on a travel blog that will feature travel experiences involving the use of Mandarin. They will also share their experiences on the nuances of doing business in China. They will also be sponsoring prizes for the SMC's online contests, which will include free air tickets and hotel accommodation.

The partnership with Page One Bookstore, Night & Day Gallery and Bar and 77th Street will make the SMC more hip and cooler. Page One has kindly agreed to host talks at their unique and artistic bookstore. Kelley Cheng of Night & Day Gallery and Bar will invite 20 top designers to design a line of fashion apparel using as their inspiration Chinese idioms. Elim Chew of 77th Street will join this initiative by making these tee-shirts available for sale at 77th Street stores in Singapore.

Our new partner, SMU has come together with Panpac Education, to create a bilingual book and CD by Margaret Chan and Li Lien Fung. The Confucius Institute has also come onboard to provide talks, workshops and programmes to help people improve their Mandarin. Eduplus Language Centre who has been partnering us will also launch a CD titled *Top 100 Misused Mandarin Phrases* which will feature MP Baey Yam Keng, MM's Chinese teacher Chua Chee Lay and Ocean Butterfly's Billy Xu. One of our media partners, MediaCorp Radio 938LIVE and Capital 958, is also launching a new bilingual CD – *English Idioms: Meanings & Origins*, 成语典故. NLB, as the secretariat of SMC, will continue to give its dedicated support; as well as host talks promoting Chinese culture in its libraries.

We must also thank 'We Wanted to be Footballers Pte Ltd', Operators of The Cage for their support. Without them, we would not be here. The Cage will also be running fun SMC programs at the Cage and on their website.

Activists are also key to SMC's strategy this year and activists like Dr Hong Hai, is an excellent example of someone who learnt Mandarin late in life because of his interest in Traditional Chinese Medicine and who now is not only a TCM Doctor but also recently earned himself a Masters degree in Chinese Literature. SMC believes that this is one of the most effective ways to engage and stimulate Singaporeans to learn Mandarin.

As a climax, we have one more special partner whose collaboration will catalyse our first initiative for the 2008 Speak Mandarin Campaign. As a movie buff, I know better than to reveal the ending, a privilege which I will leave to our Guest of Honour, Minister Lim Swee Say.

I cannot end my speech without giving recognition to the stellar personalities who have become our activists. With us here today, we have Dr Hong Hai, Ms Lim Sau Hoong, Ms Kelley Cheng, Ms Kuo Jian Hong, Ms Rita Goh, Mr Harry Tan, Mr Raphael Saw, Ms Rose Tan, Funkie Monkeys, Chou Pi Jiang, Ms Vanessa Yong and Mr Michael Wong.

Thank you.