

**ENGLISH VERSION OF PRIME MINISTER,
MR GOH CHOK TONG'S MANDARIN SPEECH AT
AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN
AT THE SINGAPORE CONFERENCE HALL,
ON 6 SEPTEMBER 1993**

This is the fifteenth year of the Speak Mandarin Campaign, and the fourth time I am launching it. Every year, a new cohort of Chinese students is brought through our bilingual education system. When they grow up, marry and have their own children, English and Mandarin will be their working languages, at home and at work. The Speak Mandarin Campaign will become redundant.

Meanwhile, we have to press on with the efforts. After 14 campaigns, the objective remains the same: Chinese Singaporeans should talk to one another in English or Mandarin and not in dialects. For social conversation, it is better if they use Mandarin. Then Mandarin will replace dialects as their mother tongue.

I am happy to see survey figures showing more and more Chinese families speaking Mandarin instead of dialects - from 26% in 1980 to 64 per cent this year. However, the use of English in Chinese homes has also increased, from nine per cent in 1980 to 31 per cent this year. We should encourage the English-speaking Chinese families to use more Mandarin at home.

To create a conducive environment for learning Mandarin, Chinese Singaporeans should speak Mandarin more among themselves: when transacting business, when discussing current affairs and on formal occasions. Of course, they must be sensitive to the non-Chinese. When Malays and Indians are present, they should use English, a common language which all understand.

I have encouraged Chinese Members of Parliament (MPs) and Ministers to occasionally speak Mandarin in Parliament, even those who were not Chinese educated. Mandarin should be widely used in higher levels of society. Then its status will be raised.

Students with an aptitude and interest in Mandarin should study the language and literature more deeply. Each year, we should send a few such students to pursue higher degrees in Chinese, in People's Republic of China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. Private institutions like the Chinese clan associations and the Chinese Chamber of Commerce should award such scholarships, with Government support and blessings.

The economic value of knowing Mandarin has increased with China's opening up of her economy. While interpreters may be available in the big cities, they are not in the smaller towns and villages. Hundreds of village enterprises are eager to upgrade themselves. They are looking for foreign partners, to gain additional capital and technical know how. Our SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) can add value to Chinese

enterprises, help them increase productivity and product quality, and in the process tap the growing consumer market in China. The ability to speak Mandarin with Chinese businessmen and officials is a tremendous advantage.

I am therefore not surprised that the first wave of Singaporean businessmen in China are mainly Nantah graduates. The next wave will comprise Mandarin-speaking professionals, engineers, architects, accountants, managers. They will build and operate Singapore's projects in China.

Our university students have responded to this trend. National University of Singapore (NUS) Chinese Studies Department started a new course on Chinese for Business and Industry. It was received with great enthusiasm. Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is offering a similar course to its students.

But exploiting the economic value of Mandarin is not the motive behind the Speak Mandarin Campaign. It is to lessen the school load on Chinese students, if they drop dialects, and speak Mandarin from young, they will find Mandarin easier to learn. That will leave them more time for English, Mathematics and other subjects.

While we get young Singaporeans to speak Mandarin, we must not overlook the need to communicate with the many old Singaporeans who do not. This was the reason why I spoke in Hokkien in the Marine Parade by-election rallies. I expect we need to do so for at least two more general elections.

I have considered allowing Television (TV) discussions in dialects on major policies, such as the goods & services tax. But I finally decided against it, as it may signal wrongly that we are reversing the Speak Mandarin Campaign. It will also undermine the Campaign.

Although we have 14 years of campaigns, we must still push on with it. If we slacken and lose our facility of Mandarin just when China offers economic opportunities it will be a great pity, indeed a great loss.

Ladies & Gentlemen, I am pleased to launch the 1993 Speak Mandarin Campaign.