

NEWS RELEASE

To be embargoed until 5 July 10pm

57-year-old pilot walked away with grand prize worth over \$10,000, as the grand winner of 华文?谁怕谁! The Chinese Challenge Grand Final

Singapore, 6 July 2009 – For the six finalists of the 华文?谁怕谁! The Chinese Challenge Grand Final TV show, taking home the grand prize, worth over S\$10,000, required not only good knowledge but wit and strategy as well. The event, graced by Manpower Minister Mr Gan Kim Yong, was telecasted last night from 8 p.m. to 10 p.m.

After a two-hour battle of wits and knowledge of the Chinese language and culture, the eldest contestant of the lot, 57-year-old pilot, Mr Soh Sin Yan, emerged as the grand champion.

A round of audition was held, where the six finalists were selected from the top 100 contestants with the highest cumulative scores for the online contest over the past 12 weeks. They include a 14-year-old student, a teacher, an engineer, a research scientist, and a magazine editor. The majority of them do not use Chinese in their daily work.

Elated with his win, Mr Soh said, “I have always found that Chinese is an interesting subject though I come from an English-speaking family background. And English is predominantly my first language. I hope that this competition can truly inspire our younger generation to embrace Chinese no matter how challenging it might seem to be. It is certainly an enriching journey as I have improved my knowledge of the Chinese language and culture in the process of researching for the answers for the online contest. I am glad that my efforts have paid off tonight.”

The online contest focussed on wide-ranging topics from language, history, literary arts, local knowledge to contemporary art and popular culture. It attracted an overwhelming response of close to 15,000 participants over a period of 12 weeks. 12 questions were posted weekly over a period of three months and monthly draws were held to award the top scorers. The questions were also in Hanyu Pinyin and English to ensure an inclusive campaign that invites English-speaking Chinese Singaporeans and Permanent Residents to participate as well. Based on the online contest’s poll, the language preference of 47.5% of the respondents is English. In addition, an overwhelming majority of 81% of the contest participants are Singapore-born citizens.

During the Grand Final, six resource panelists were also lined up to assist the contestants. Familiar faces such as Baey Yam Keng (Member of Parliament for Tangjong Pagar GRC), Bryan Wong (Mediacorp artiste) and Dr Chua Chee Lay (Chief Executive, CL Lab), sat on the panel to give their advice, when a contestant chose to use a ‘lifeline’ trump card to seek help.

This year's campaign has seen a very strong level of support from prominent personalities. Other than Ministers and Members of Parliament like Mr Lim Swee Say and Mr Gan Kim Yong (see below * for full list), renowned investor Jim Rogers and his family also lent their support by making cameo appearances in TV trailers and video skits for the Grand Final.

Ms Lim Sau Hoong, Chairperson of the Promote Mandarin Council, said: "It is indeed heartening to know that we have so many strong champions for the Chinese language and culture, and 华文?谁怕谁! The Chinese Challenge has attracted broad participation from Singaporeans and Permanent Residents. We hope this TV game show will give contestants and viewers an entertaining and light-hearted approach to learning Mandarin and further pique and promote their interest in the Chinese language and culture."

Co-organised with The Chinese Language and Culture Fund and Business China, 华文?谁怕谁! The Chinese Challenge was first launched on 30 March as a key initiative undertaken by the Promote Mandarin Council in conjunction with the launch of the Speak Mandarin Campaign 2009. The objective of the initiative is to showcase the finest in Chinese language and culture through an online quiz contest that features captivating design and interesting content over a 12-week duration.

Mr Soh, the grand winner of the night, walked away with more than \$10,000 worth of prizes, including \$5,000 worth of NTUC vouchers and \$4,000 cash.

* List of Ministers and MPs with cameo appearance

1. Mr Lim Swee Say (Minister, Prime Minister's Office)
2. Mr Gan Kim Yong (Minister, Ministry of Manpower)
3. Ms Grace Fu (Senior Minister of State, Ministry of National Development & Ministry of Education)
4. Mr Lee Yi Shyan (Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry & Ministry of Manpower)
5. Mr Teo Ser Luck (Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports & Ministry of Transport)
6. Mr Sam Tan (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry & Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts)
7. Mr Baey Yam Keng (Tanjong Pagar GRC)
8. Ms Josephine Teo (Member of Parliament for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC)

About Promote Mandarin Council

The Promote Mandarin Council supports the national objective of building a community of Singaporeans who have a strong command of Mandarin as well as an appreciation and understanding of Chinese culture, tradition and history.

About Chinese Language and Culture Fund

The Chinese Language and Culture Fund was set up by the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations and Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry to promote Chinese language and culture.

About Business China

Business China aims to encourage Singaporeans to be bilingual and bicultural so that they can be more effective in creating and strengthening linkages with China in social, cultural, economic and other developments.