

Speak Mandarin Campaign 2005

Date: 15th November 2005

Time: 10am – 12noon

Venue: National Library, The Plaza, Level 1
100 Victoria Street

Programme

10am	Media/Guests Registration
10.30am	All guests to be seated Program starts
11am	Arrival of Guest-of-Honour Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong
11.05am	Welcome Address by Prof Wee Chow Hou Chairman, Promote Mandarin Council
11.15am	Speech by Guest-of-Honour Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong
11.30am	Program
12pm	Lunch Reception
	Refreshments

MEDIA RELEASE

Embargoed until delivery

SPEAK MANDARIN CAMPAIGN 2005 JAZZES UP ‘华语 COOL!’ THEME WITH A LIFESTYLE-ORIENTED APPROACH

Singapore, 15 November 2005: The Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) 2005 is launched today by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at National Library, The Plaza. This year, it will be driving home the ‘华语 (hua yu) COOL!’ message with a lifestyle-oriented approach focused on reaching out to English educated Chinese Singaporeans, particularly those in the ‘post-65 generation’.

This year’s campaign aims to build on the tagline first developed in the previous year’s campaign to associate Mandarin and Chinese culture with a hip, cool and sophisticated image. To do this, SMC will sport an updated and snazzier look and feel, with eight vibrant colours incorporated into the campaign’s promotional collaterals. The SMC has also involved several partners in the leisure, lifestyle and entertainment fields to create events and programmes that will appeal to the target audience, and that are in line with their lifestyle.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Now into its 26th year, the SMC was first launched in 1979 by then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, with the main objective of encouraging Chinese Singaporeans to speak Mandarin as a common language, instead of dialects. This has proven to be very successful. In the last decade, the campaign has shifted its focus towards encouraging professionals and young people (including students) to learn and speak Mandarin. Apart from highlighting Mandarin as an avenue to understanding one’s roots and Chinese

culture, the campaign has also stressed the importance of Mandarin for economic and business competitiveness.

The 'post-65' generation was first identified as a key group in society by PM Lee Hsien Loong when he took office. Having benefited from the growing affluence of post-independence Singapore, those in this group are mostly well educated, well traveled and well to do. In the last three years, the SMC has identified the English educated Chinese Singaporeans in this group as an important target audience.

Many of them do not speak Mandarin in the home, professional or social environment. Some may even have a stigma of speaking Mandarin as 'uncool' or unsophisticated, carried over from misconceptions during their youth or school days. Children of parents within this group who are currently in school may experience more difficulty with learning Mandarin and some discomfort in using the language in their daily lives.

'With various exciting events lined up specifically to appeal to the various segments of the target group, the Speak Mandarin Campaign 2005 aims to encourage English-speaking Chinese Singaporeans to have an open mind towards the use of Mandarin,' said Professor Wee Chow Hou, Chairman of the Promote Mandarin Council. 'One of the main objectives of the campaign is to convince them that Mandarin can be hip, relevant and more importantly, essential for a sense of self-identity. In fact, many lessons in Chinese history still are of much relevance and use for business today.'

Events and Programmes

In line with creating an image that speaking Mandarin can be hip and cool, a range of events are lined up from December 2005 to late 2006, to appeal to different segments within the target audience.

To engage the youths, there are plans to organize Mandarin R&B pop and dance themed parties in various top nightspots in Singapore. This promises to be as 'hip and

happening' as their English equivalents. The first party of the series is targeted for December 2005.

For the more mature and sophisticated crowd, they can expect 'Oriental chic' evenings at popular jazz joints with top local jazz performers such as Jacintha Abishenagaden and others crooning Mandarin jazz standards. With the partnership with Golden Village, moviegoers can now also look forward to a series of Mandarin Movie Sessions where both blockbuster and art-house movies would be on the menu. To start the ball rolling, CHICKEN LITTLE in Mandarin will open in Singapore at Golden Village exclusively on 1st December 2005. Set to be the biggest animation movie of the year, movie-buffs of all ages can anticipate the screenings of the Walt Disney movie to be in both Mandarin and English!

In addition, to help people ease into the '华语 (hua yu) COOL' lingo, there is The Straits Times – Cool Speak! pocket-sized guidebook. This newly published handy dictionary of current Mandarin words, phrases and lingo has been compiled from the popular weekly 'Cool Speak!' column that has been running in St Life! for the past year. True to its moniker, the attractive guide comes in eight different vibrant colours, in line with the SMC look and feel. These booklets will be made available for sale at all Popular Bookstore outlets from December 2005 and all proceeds are to benefit the Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

SMC Partners

The lineup of programmes and events for this year's campaign is made possible by the involvement of exciting and promising partners such as St James Power Station, headed by Andrew Ing who is known for his involvement in the development of Zouk. Touted as the 'stylish Chinese entertainment venue with a western sensibility', it will be the first to be unveiled next year in the much-hyped multi-concept complex. Toy Factory, known for its offering of acclaimed English plays and musicals in the arts/theatre scene, will be staging a series of plays in Mandarin featuring popular actors in the English arts scene. To help promote the learning of Mandarin in fun, innovative ways, the Singapore

Zoo has come onboard to support SMC 2005. It has already made the first step by adding on Mandarin explanatory signboards alongside the English ones for its exhibits, and intends to roll out more educational programs in Mandarin and English for school-going children.

Campaign Ambassadors

In the SMC tradition, campaign ambassadors will help to promote and drive home the campaign message to the target audience. This year's campaign ambassadors are JJ Lin Jun Jie (singer), Hossan Leong (actor/performer) and Fanny Lai (Executive Director, Singapore Zoo and Night Safari). Both JJ Lin and Hossan Leong are household names in their own fields of work (i.e. Mandarin Pop and Theatre/Comedy/Arts respectively) and are perfect role models to showcase and share about how speaking Mandarin and tapping into their Chinese culture and roots have helped them achieve success in their careers. Fanny Lai will reiterate the point that proficiency in the Mandarin language will open the door to more business and economic opportunities in the business sector.

Conclusion

With these concerted efforts and a more focused, lifestyle-oriented approach SMC 2005 hopes to reach out and engage more English speaking Chinese Singaporeans to speak and use Mandarin in their daily lives – especially at home and in social settings.

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About Speak Mandarin Campaign

The Speak Mandarin Campaign (SMC) was launched by then Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew in 1979. Now into its 26th year, the Speak Mandarin Campaign is a year-round campaign, focusing on creating awareness through publicity and getting community involvement. More information on SMC can be found on www.mandarin.org.sg

About National Library Board

The National Library Board (NLB) was established on 1 September 1995 with the mission to continuously expand the learning capability of the nation. NLB oversees the management of the National Library, three regional libraries, 18 community libraries, 18 community children's libraries, as well as libraries belong to government agencies, schools and private institutions. More information on NLB can be found on www.nlb.gov.sg