

Annex B

SPEECH BY MR TEO CHEE HEAN, DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE LAUNCH EVENT OF MALAY LANGUAGE MONTH 2010 ON SATURDAY, 26 JUNE 2010 AT 12 NOON AT THE POD, NATIONAL LIBRARY BUILDING, VICTORIA STREET

Mr Hawazi Daipi,
Senior Parliamentary Secretary
and Chairman of Malay Language Council, Singapore

Members of Parliament,

Your Excellencies,

Honoured guests and participants,

Greetings and good afternoon

Introduction

1. I am happy to be with you at the launch of the Malay Language Month 2010.
2. The Government's policy of promoting English and our mother-tongues remains unchanged. Our bilingual language policy is fundamental. It ensures that our people are economically competitive, while at the same time remain rooted to the key languages and cultures that make up Singapore.
3. Globalisation has made our bilingual policy even more important. English remains the key language for us to connect to the world for business and technology. Superior English proficiency is a key advantage of Singapore and Singaporeans. It helps make Singapore a global business and educational hub. It gives Singaporeans an advantage in education and employment.
4. On the other hand, the growth of Asian economies and their increasing prominence in the world economy provide an added impetus for knowing

Asian languages and cultures. Even non-Asian companies and business people recognize this, and there is a great interest in learning Asian languages. Hence our knowledge of our mother-tongues gives us an advantage in the global and regional business environment. Our bilingual policy allows Singapore and Singaporeans to be a bridge for business between the rest of the world and Asia.

5. Our emphasis on mother tongue also recognizes our cultural and linguistic heritage. Knowledge of our mother culture and language anchors us in terms of culture and values. It roots us to Singapore, and gives Singaporeans the cultural confidence to engage the region and the world.
6. The Malay Language also has a unique and important role in Singapore. Singapore is located in the Malay Archipelago, and for cultural, people-to-people, business and foreign affairs reasons, it is important for Singaporeans, and not just Malay Singaporeans to know Malay.
7. I thus applaud the Malay Language Council Singapore for organizing the Malay Language Month to encourage the Malay community to use the Malay language and popularize Malay language among the wider Singaporean community.
8. With the support of the various organizations, Community Clubs, MAECs, educational institutions and schools, I am confident that this year's Malay Language Month will succeed in achieving its objectives.

Continued Government Support

9. To promote a language, it must be used, starting with individuals and their families. The Malay community itself needs to take leadership and ownership for this and encourage members of the community to use the

language. This is a responsibility not only of teachers and members of the Malay literary and cultural community, but of the community as a whole.

10. On its part, the government will continue to give support for our mother tongue languages.
11. In the area of education, the government provides support through special programmes for the Malay Language. The Elective Malay Language for Secondary Schools programme (or EMAS) and the Malay Language Elective Programme (MLEP) for Junior Colleges are into their 10th year this year. Currently, we have two EMAS and two MLEP centres catering to students who are interested in and are have the aptitude to deepen their understanding and knowledge of Malay language and literature.
12. Identifying our language and culture leaders early is important so that the next generation can be prepared with the experience and knowledge needed. This strengthens our effort to maintain our language. I am glad that there are currently a total of 438 students enrolled in these programmes.
13. In addition, the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee (MLLPC) at the Ministry of Education, chaired by Senior Parliamentary Secretary Mr Masagos Zulkifli will continue to collaborate with community organizations to organise language activities for students, teachers and parents. I am glad to know that there are currently 268 trainee teachers enrolled in the National Institute of Education, training to be Malay Language teachers. For our in-service teachers, MOE is setting up the Malay Language Centre Singapore at Bishan. This will help ensure that we have a steady stream of well-qualified Malay Language teachers for our schools.

14. At the community level, the Malay Language Council Singapore, led by Senior Parliamentary Secretary Mr Hawazi Daipi has been given additional funding support by MICA, as mentioned by Mr Hawazi in his speech earlier. Government support at all levels reflects the Government's commitment in our efforts to promote Malay language in Singapore.

Malay Language Usage in Singapore

15. Ladies and gentlemen, bilingualism and multi-lingualism is a reality in our globalised world. This is also the reality in Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia, where the exclusive reliance on Bahasa Melayu or Bahasa Indonesia alone is not sufficient. A knowledge of other languages, such as English, Arabic, Chinese French or Japanese is an added advantage. In Singapore, we have long recognized the importance of bilingualism for economic and cultural reasons.
16. Community leaders play a key role in promoting language and heritage. I encourage the Malay community in Singapore to value and promote the Malay language. Learn it and use it. And for those who are interested and able, deepen their understanding and knowledge of the language. I am confident that through promotional activities like the Malay Language Month, the Malay language will remain actively used and vibrant in the community, schools and workplace.

Conclusion

17. It is now my great pleasure to launch the Malay Language Month 2010.

Thank you.