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**SPEECH BY MR NG CHEE MENG, ACTING MINISTER FOR EDUCATION (SCHOOLS)
AT THE LAUNCH OF BULAN BAHASA 2016 ON SATURDAY, 3 SEPTEMBER 2016**

Minister Masagos Zulkifli

Parliamentary Secretary Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Chairman of Malay Language Council of Singapore

Ms Rahayu Mahzam, Chairman of the Bulan Bahasa 2016 Committee

Mrs Rosa Daniel, Chief Executive Officer, National Heritage Board

Ladies and Gentlemen

Selamat petang dan salam sejahtera.

1. It is my pleasure to launch Bulan Bahasa 2016. I am deeply heartened by the very colourful and warm welcome. Thank you Team Syabab for the kompang performance, Perguruan Silat Seni Gayong for the Silat demonstration and the beautiful dance by Sriwana.
2. We are here today, because we share a common desire, to preserve the Malay language and culture, and to pass on this love for the language and culture to our future generations. In diverse and multi-cultural Singapore, our Mother Tongues are pivotal in strengthening our ethnic roots, as well as our cultural and national identities. Bahasa Melayu is our national language, and the Malay culture is also very much a part of Singapore's heritage and social fabric.
3. Over the years, Bulan Bahasa has grown from strength to strength. I would like to commend the Malay Language Council of Singapore, for its sterling efforts in



presenting Bulan Bahasa as a signature platform for promoting the Malay language and providing our students an opportunity to show their love and mastery of the language.

4. Singapore's bilingual policy is a cornerstone of our education policy and remains an asset in Singapore. The learning of our Mother Tongue reinforces our cultural identity, values and roots, giving us a globalised view that complements the perspective of the English-speaking world. Our Mother Tongue Languages also enable Singaporeans to connect with communities across Asia and the world, and strengthen ties with our neighbours and beyond. Effective language learning builds confidence in our children, and the values and culture passed on will remain precious for a lifetime.
5. In April this year, I had the chance to meet up with recipients of the Anugerah Guru Arif Budiman Award. I was deeply impressed by the teachers' dedication to the teaching and learning of the Malay language. The teachers shared that apart from teaching the Malay language, literature and culture, they also aim to build character in their students, so that they may in turn give back to society.
6. To all parents and teachers here today, keep up the good work so that our young can enjoy the environment, opportunities and support for language learning. As the saying goes, it takes a village, to raise a child. Hence, I call on to everyone to contribute to this endeavour.
7. Last year, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced MOE's increased funding commitment for the Mother Tongue Language Learning and Promotion Committees, with the intention to create environments beyond the schools that are conducive to the learning for our Mother Tongue languages.
8. I am happy to witness the successful collaboration between the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee and the Malay Language Council of Singapore, and the results that can be seen here today at the launch of Bulan Bahasa 2016. More good results can be achieved as we continue to work together to promote the language to the young, to the community and to Singapore.



9. The events and programmes in this year's Bulan Bahasa are varied, rich, and representative of how dynamic and alive the Malay language is in Singapore, today. And it is always heartening to see our young involved and playing their part in keeping the language and culture alive.
10. I look forward to visiting the booths and finding out more about the activities put together by Yumin Primary School and Yusof Ishak Secondary School, and also meeting all the Rakan Bahasa during my tour later.
11. Nevertheless, the task of promoting Malay language must not be only confined to Bulan Bahasa. All groups of Malay speakers and everyone in the community must be encouraged to keep Bahasa Melayu alive in Singapore – to ensure continuity for the language, and in pass knowledge to the young.
12. This year, Teck Whye Secondary School, East Spring Secondary School and Townsville Primary have enjoyed visits by Duta Bahasa - Siti Aisyah, (perhaps better known by her pen name, Chempaka Aizim), Hairianto Diman and Asnida Daud.
13. The Duta Bahasa shared with the students the importance of a solid language foundation, their love of the language, the language advantage they enjoy in their careers as a result of their mastery of the Malay language, and ways in which they bring the language alive for the people they interact and communicate with.
14. I hope all the Duta Bahasa will continue to inspire our young, and my congratulation as well to the new Duta Bahasa who will be appointed today – Ustazah Nurul 'Izzah Khamsani, Megat Muhammad Firdaus Mohamad and Siti Khalijah Zainal.
15. Let us all continue to speak our Mother Tongue languages with pride and celebrate our multi-cultural heritage. If I can end by sharing a pantun.

Ke Sungai Kallang naik kereta,
Tempat orang mancing di muara;



Bahasa Melayu identiti kita,

Ilmu, Mesra, Budaya Singapura.

16. Terima kasih.