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Speeches

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SPEECH BY MR THARMAN SHANMUGARATNAM, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION & SECOND MINISTER FOR FINANCE, AT THE LAUNCH OF MALAY LANGUAGE MONTH 2006, ON SATURDAY, 1 JULY 2006, AT 3.00 PM, AT TAMPINES JUNIOR COLLEGE AUDITORIUM

Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Manpower and

Chairperson of the Malay Language Month 2006 Organising Committee,

Members of Parliament,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

(SPEECH DELIVERED IN MALAY)

Introduction

1. It is my pleasure to be here to join you in launching the Malay Language Month 2006.
2. I am very pleased that a community event like this is held in a school. It provides a good opportunity for the community to have a better understanding of the changes that are happening in our schools, and for our students to have real-life community experience.
3. We need to create this kind of opportunity as often as possible, so as to establish a close school-community bond. Together, our schools and the community can work towards making the learning and use of the Mother Tongue Language, in your case, the Malay language, become meaningful to our students. Together, we can make Malay language lessons come alive for our Malay Language Elective Programme (MLEP) students in Tampines Junior College, applying the language in practical terms in and outside the school what they have learnt in class. This, of course, can be replicated in other schools.

Staying Relevant and Current

4. Government is committed to keeping the teaching and learning of the Mother Tongue relevant and current to the needs of our students. A constantly evolving world cannot but impact the education landscape. Therefore, the way we teach and learn the Mother Tongue Languages must work in tandem with all the significant changes taking place around us.
5. In the past two years, MOE has separately conducted reviews on the three official Mother Tongue Languages. We have looked closely at the curriculum and pedagogy for the Chinese

Language, Malay Language and Tamil Language. We have gained deeper insights into how our students learn the Mother Tongue languages, and we have made recommendations on how we can help the students learn the languages well. It is important that we teach the Mother Tongue languages effectively, for they are the vehicles through which we transmit culture and values. Competence in the use of the Mother Tongue languages, in addition to English, has given Singapore its distinctiveness, as well as the cutting edge in a very competitive global environment. Each of us, therefore, plays a vital role to ensure that our bilingual education always stays vibrant and successful.

6. In our Malay Language review, we have agreed to the vision of developing ML students to become a person with the qualities of *Arif Budiman*^[1] - a learned person who contributes to society. The hope is for Malay Language students to be steeped in knowledge of the Malay language and culture, together with its constant growth and renewal, in the context of multi-racial Singapore. As our students strive to realise the vision of *Arif Budiman*, they will learn to understand themselves, their aspirations and their own potential better. Their ever-continuing learning cannot but contribute meaningfully to their community and nation.

7. The vision of *Arif Budiman* is not exclusively intended for students and teachers. The Malay language will end up only as a school subject if it is confined to within the classroom walls and the school perimeter. We must acknowledge that the community is rightly a stakeholder, and therefore in sharing the vision of *Arif Budiman*. As stakeholders, our parents, the media and community organisations, are MOE's partners in our strive to realise the vision. It has to be a collaborative effort, synergising collectively in facilitating the development and wide use of Malay language in Singapore.

Schools-Community Synergy

8. Collaboration among Malay community organisations, the media, parents and schools, let me reiterate, is necessary if we want to enthuse students in learning the Malay Language to as high a level as they capable of and develop in them an abiding interest in the language, literature and culture. It is with this objective that MOE set up the Malay Language Learning and Promotion Committee (MLLPC) in February this year. The Committee was first chaired by Mr Hawazi Daipi, when he was MOE's Senior Parliamentary Secretary. Now, the torch has been passed to Mr Masagos Zulkifli, our new Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education. He will continue with the good work started by Mr Hawazi and the Committee.

9. MLLPC has planned to work closely with Malay community organisations, the media, Institutes of Higher Learning and schools to organise language, literature and cultural activities. These activities will help broaden the Malay language environment to allow students to continue using the language even after they have left school. The aim is to keep them in permanent touch with a living culture, and not just learning the language for examinations in school.

Government Funding for MLLPC and TLLPC

10. Government will help fund the Committee's efforts in organising activities to broaden and raise the level of use of Malay Language in our multi-racial society. The activities will promote the sharing of experiences so that there will be better appreciation of Malay Language and culture among the community and among Singaporeans at large. MOE give strong support to these efforts. **MOE is providing a grant of \$300,000 per year, over 5 years, to help fund the programmes. On top of the minimum grant, MOE will provide 1:1 matching for funds raised by the community, subject to a cap of \$1.5 million.**

11. We will soon also announce our support for the promotion of Tamil among our Tamil language community.

12. In general terms, the fund will help to create platforms to enhance spoken Malay, organise literary activities for students and teachers, promote an appreciation of reading in Malay language, and procure, develop and make easily available reading resources from pre-school to secondary levels. Funds could also be considered for our students and teachers to go on overseas study trips and attend training programmes by overseas experts.

13. In sum, with the setting up of MLLPC and government support in funding its activities, the possibilities and opportunities to use and promote Malay language have been and will be greatly increased. Let us take good advantage of possibilities and opportunities for the benefit and promotion of the Malay language.

Conclusion

14. This year's Malay Language Month theme, **My Language is Dynamic**, fits nicely into the overall plan for Malay Language in Singapore. The theme is indicative of the shared desire of the community and schools for the direction the language should be moving along – one that is dynamic, staying relevant and current to the needs of students, the community and the nation.

15. I would like to congratulate the Malay Language Month Organising Committee and the Malay Language Council, Singapore, for organising this year's Malay Language Month to help steer the course for the Malay language to flourish in and beyond Singapore.

16. Thank you.

[1] Arif originated from Arabic and means wisdom; and Budiman originated from Sanskrit and means contributor. The term Arif Budiman also reflects the multicultural heritage embedded in Malay language and culture.

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