

**NOT FOR GENERAL RELEASE**

**TRANSCRIPT OF “BILINGUALISM” – A DISCUSSION WITH THE**  
**PRIME MINISTER**

( Translation from Mandarin )

Announcer: This is the second television discussion on bilingualism with the Prime Minister. In the last discussion, the Prime Minister answered in English, a wide range of questions concerning bilingualism. In this programme, the Prime Minister will deal further with the subject in Mandarin, with the Chinese educated. In the studio is also an audience made up of parents and members of school advisory and management committees, undergraduates of Nanyang University and the University of Singapore and teaching staff from the two universities and the Institute of Education.

Questions on bilingualism will be put to the Prime Minister by a panel of four:

Prof Koh Lip Lin. Prof Koh is a member of the Nanyang University Council; Associate Professor in the Department of Chemistry, Nanyang University; and President of the Nanyang University Academic Staff Association.

Dr Gwee Yee Hean. Dr Gwee, Senior Lecturer in the History Department of Nanyang University, is also a member of the Adult Education Board. At one time, he was Head of the Education Department of the University of Singapore.

Mr Ung Gim Sei. Mr Ung has worked as a Chinese journalist. He holds a B.A. (Hons) degree in Economics from the University of Singapore, and is currently the General Manager of Nanyang Siang Pau.

## National Archives of Singapore

Mr Lim Nai Tien. Mr Lim has had a long experience in teaching in both English and Chinese schools. He was the Principal of Hwa Chong Junior College and an Assistant Director of Education before he joined the Sin Chew Jit Poh as the Development Manager (Education and Culture).

Mr James Fu Chiao Sian, the Chairman, is an RTS News Controller and Press Secretary to the Prime Minister.

Chairman

(Mr James

Fu): Prime Minister, ladies and gentlemen, since the implementation of the bilingual education policy in our country, we have now the situation that 90% of parents send their children to English-medium schools. This shows that the parents in general have realised the importance of English for their children. At the same time, they have also realised the need for their children to learn their mother language though the standard of competency may be different. Does this situation mean that we have already achieved our objectives in education? In today's discussion, I think it may be better for us to begin with this question. Mr Prime Minister, please.

Prime

Minister: If our education policy had achieved the ideal objectives, then there would have been no need for this discussion. This is a very complex and complicated problem. Nineteen years ago, we thought that bilingualism was a more practical policy for our society and one

which would help forge social cohesion. We would have a common language for the various ethnic groups and at the same time each ethnic group could retain or preserve its own tradition, culture and language. Today, however, nineteen years later, we can see that amongst the Chinese, not more than 5% of them are completely or effectively bilingual; that is, they are able to listen, understand, speak, read and write both Chinese/Mandarin and English. And there are probably over 20% who are fairly at home with two languages, more or less able to listen and understand, and able to speak and express themselves by using relatively simple and plain terms; that is, they are more comfortable in one language and just passable in a second. But those in the middle, the students from secondary one to secondary four, are fairly poor. This is because they are only fairly adequate in their first language – I would say passable, not completely adequate. And as for the second language, they are able to listen, understand and read but lack facility in speech. Those who cannot get through their PSLE make up about 30%. They have problems. For those who are from the Chinese medium, although they are unable to get into secondary school, they will be able to speak Mandarin and know about 1,500 characters. But those from the English medium schools are in a dilemma. They

do not speak fluent English, and have difficulty even in understanding. They may speak Mandarin but do not have the facility: they probably know 700 characters. This is the result we have arrived at. We must work out a proper solution; for instance, perhaps re-arrange our school curriculum and at the same time face this problem in a practical and pragmatic manner. We have to recognise that students vary in their abilities, in their family background, in their language background. What language do the parents speak at home, what is their level of education; does the student get any help from his brothers and sisters; what language do his neighbours and friends use when they speak to him? Unless we analyse these problems in a hard-headed manner and formulate a practical plan, I think we are going to waste a lot of time, energy and financial resources and at the same time prejudice the future of many of our students. This is a very big problem. Every parent is concerned with this problem. It is best, therefore, that you bring up for discussion at this forum, any points about which parents, students and others concerned are not happy or have any doubts. The Government will definitely accept any good suggestions or proposals you may have. We must improve our educational policy

National Archives of Singapore

so that it gives every student the language competence and knowledge he can absorb.

Dr Gwee

Yee Nean: Mr Prime Minister, the impression I gathered from what you mentioned just now is that we have a more pragmatic view of our bilingual educational policy; that is, we have taken cognizance of the differences between individuals. The goal of our bilingual educational policy will, therefore, definitely result in different levels of competency. In other words, we cannot expect all Singaporeans to reach the same level of competency. I think this is a correct view. Mr Prime Minister, you have expressed concern about some of the students who, as you have stated, are of a considerable number, about 30%. They may not be able to learn English or Chinese well. You have mentioned the need to consider making new arrangements for them. May I know what you have in mind in this regard?

Prime

Minister: Our educational policy is not determined by the Government alone. If it were to be decided entirely by the Government alone, with no regard for the views of the parents, our educational policy would have been entirely different 19 years ago, as the Government could have made a cooler and more rational analysis as to objectives. The methods and measures required could then have been devised and implemented accordingly.

The problem is that this is a problem of language and culture and also a problem of the feelings of parents. These are inseparable.

Every parent, on the one hand, wants his children to preserve their tradition, culture and the language of their ancestors, that means dialects; he also wants Mandarin and English. The problem is

whether his children have the kind of ability to master three languages.

Therefore, whatever the case, whatever may be the ideal policy, whatever may be the best methods, if the parents do not accept them, there will be problems. At present, because Nantah has switched over to English as the medium of instruction, many parents

think they have made a serious mistake by sending their children to Chinese schools. I think this attitude is over-simplifying the matter. But it is very difficult for me to decide on how to formulate a new policy. This is because while it would be very simple for me to draw up a programme, it would not be quite so easy for the parents to accept it. So, please put forward whatever good suggestions you may have.

Ung Gim

Sei: Mr Prime Minister, the impression I have gathered from the analysis you made just now is that our bilingual educational policy is fundamentally correct insofar as its goal is concerned. However, there may have been some imperfections in implementation. For example, in the case of the Chinese stream, the mother tongue has been taught well but not the second language; or, in the case of the English stream, English as the first language has been taught very well ...

Prime

Minister: That is very difficult to say ...

Ung Gim



Sei: ... If it had not been done conscientiously, probably even the first language might not have been taught well; but what is relatively certain is that as far as the second language is concerned, not enough has been done in the implementation and there are still areas for deliberation. Therefore, at the moment, we have our goal established but there must be some improvements or even reforms in the implementation. Do you agree with this view?

Prime

Minister: First of all, let me bring up an ideal solution but that is not practical at all because the Republic does not have the required financial and manpower resources. If we want everyone to be able to speak, understand, write and read English and Chinese, you should send a child to kindergarten, full day, at the age of three; at the same time, you must have specially trained teachers able to take care of the children not only while they are learning through play but also to teach them to speak in two languages – standard and grammatically correct Mandarin and English. A child begins to speak at the age of 1½ to 2. When he is listening, he is not thinking about what the word is. He listens before he speaks to you. So he learns gradually and naturally. In the evening, when the parents bring him home,

National Archives of Singapore

they should speak Mandarin or English as far as possible because if you also speak dialect – Hokkien, Teochew, Hainanese and what have you – the learning process of the child will be made more complicated. So, as it goes on in this way until he is 18, the child will then definitely be able to understand and speak two languages with facility. The range of his vocabulary is another matter: this depends on his endowment and ability. For an able student, he will have, in the case of his first language, a vocabulary of 6,000 to 7,000 words when he passes pre-university two and, in the case of his second language, he will have a vocabulary of 4,000 to 5,000 words.

But those who have gone through primary school and are unable to get into secondary school are obviously limited in their vocabulary.

For instance, they may have acquired over 2,000 words in the first

language and over 1,000 words in their second language. They may

speak quite fluently, but the number of words which they can

command is comparatively limited. That would be an ideal position.

But what is the actual position? Right from his birth, the child hears

only dialect at home, speaks only dialect; sometimes two dialects,

because father and mother speak different dialects. When he plays

with friends in the neighbourhood, he speaks yet another dialect.

This becomes very complicated. When he reaches the age of four, he enters a kindergarten class run by the People's Association. His teachers speak poor Mandarin and are even worse in English. He goes to school at six, and his teachers are far from ideal. The English taught him is Singapore English and the Mandarin, Singapore Mandarin. Back home, he is used to speaking dialect with his parents and with his neighbourhood friends he also speaks dialect. It is just impossible to master three languages. In the end, over 30% in the primary schools of the English stream fail to get into secondary school: ten years ago, the figure was 50%. Last year, it dropped to 32%, and in the Chinese stream, it dropped to 28%. But the problem has become even more complicated in secondary schools because the vocabulary required is even greater. At secondary four, you may be required to have 3,000 words in your first language, and over 2,000 words in the second language. The more intelligent student may not have a problem. He should be able to command over 4,000 words in the first language and he shouldn't have a problem having over 3,000 words in the second language. But there will be problems for the average student who will find this very difficult. This is because a language can only be remembered through constant use. But a child, when he is at home, normally

does not use the two languages he learns at school. He spends five hours a day at school. There are only 200 days in school a year. So the language in which he uses at home and the language in which he speaks with his friends has a considerable influence on him. The result is, when you go to our military camps, you feel disappointed hearing how they speak. After ten to twelve years of education, they are not able to speak even grammatically correct sentences. They speak as they like, and it is very unpleasant to the ears. How does one correct them? They have to be corrected in all respects.

Parents should help and encourage their children. If they themselves speak dialect, they should encourage their children to speak Mandarin, they should learn Mandarin with their children, help them reduce their burden. The problem is more simple now. If

we leave our young people to make their own choice, then the languages they will use will be dialect and English. This is because dialect is the language they have learnt from very young. They don't need to make an effort to think before they speak; the pronunciation, the intonation, etc – these just come naturally.

English is a language he wants to learn. Because he sees very clearly that it is used in every department – not only in Government

departments but also in banks, in all spheres of business. Ten years ago, the Chinese banks used Chinese. But now, because of the convenience of computers, they too, have switched over to English. That is why you don't need to encourage him to learn English. He himself knows, because his friends also know, that this is a language which has to be learnt.

90% of our primary one students now attend English schools. 70% of their time is spent in learning subjects with English as the medium of instruction, and only 30% in either Mandarin and Malay. If you let things take their own course, every parent will naturally want to better his child's chances of getting through from primary to secondary school, from secondary to pre-university and from pre-university to the university. Then Chinese will become only a very heavy, extra burden.

The Chairman said just now that every parent wants his children to be conversant in two languages. I think it only appears to be so.

The fact is at the beginning, he thinks his children will certainly be able to master both languages. However, after some time, he realises that his children are not going to master the languages so easily after all, so he has to make a choice. What choice will he

make? In the end, he chooses to reduce the learning of Chinese and gives a greater emphasis to English. I think this is a grave mistake. Because once we lose this language – very few people can ever speak standard English or understand the thinking of the British and Americans and their philosophy – our own traditional culture and civilisation is also lost, and that will be a tragedy. That is why I would like to take this opportunity to point out ... I think this is a turning point. If just because some changes have been made to Nantah, you want to do some reconsideration, thinking that there is no more need to learn Chinese to get into the university, I think this is not a good thing for the future of our society. Briefly, every person needs to know himself, to know where he is from. Born in Singapore? All right; but where were his ancestors from? Were they born in Singapore? No. What kind of language did they speak? Dialect? Various dialects were also spoken by their friends. That is why we must understand our history. Scores of years ago, many Chinese migrated to Southeast Asia to seek a living. Because China was then in great turmoil – there were disasters, civil wars, all kinds of trouble. However, every historian knows that no other race has had such a long history – over four thousand years of continuous history.

This is the only civilisation whose language and culture have remained the same over the years. The present-day Chinese or descendants of Chinese are the same as the Chinese who created civilised society two to three thousand years ago.

I think that whether we are building a nation or a new society, we all want to know our roots. The American blacks also want to know where they have come from. Their ancestors were caught in West Africa, brought over to America where they were sold as slaves. But now two hundred years later, they still want to trace their roots, they want to know where they have come from. You would have seen the series "Roots" on television recently. Man is a very strange social being. He wants to know his roots. It will be of immense help to you if you know your roots. For one thing, it gives you the confidence without which nothing can be achieved. Where there is confidence, many things can be done.

So I think those parents who have chosen to send their children to Chinese schools should not think that they have made a mistake. It is not a mistake. Their children's English may not be very good. It

may not be as good as that of the English-stream students, but give them one or two years to make that extra effort and they will certainly make it.

If you have a good grasp of Chinese, you will also have a good grasp of English. For English is easier to learn: Chinese is harder. Listening is very easy. If you have been doing it since childhood, listening to Mandarin is very easy. Speaking it is also easy, but writing Chinese is not easy because it is not a phonetic language. I can, therefore, simply say that there is no ideal solution to this problem, but we have got to go on looking for a good solution, a solution nearer the ideal.

National Archives of Singapore



Prof Koh

Lip Lin: Mr Prime Minister, you mentioned just now that we ought to know our roots, that we ought to treasure the culture, tradition, ethnics and the value system of our ancestors. I think all of us here are in full agreement with you on this point.

However, we have seen the current educational trend in Singapore. As the Chairman has just mentioned, 90% of parents have sent their children to English schools. This percentage may go up next year and the year after. This being the case, I am afraid that most of the talents that we turn out in future will be more at home with English. This is to say that those people will be more exposed to the influence of western culture, the western lifestyle. When this happens, they will gradually lose their own oriental culture. So Mr Prime Minister, what measures or what policies do you think we should adopt to rectify such a trend in education?

Prime

Minister: To resolve this problem, we have to arrange our school curriculum in such a way as to suit the different capacities of our students. The 5% who can make it to the university – this percentage may go up to

7%, and then 8% -- they will certainly be able to master two languages. They must be made to learn two languages from primary school or from kindergarten. They must also have a fairly extensive vocabulary. If you do not do well in the first and second language, you will not be admitted to the university. Whether you come from a Chinese or an English school, you have got to do well in the second language.

I think that with this ruling, every student who can make it to the university with the entry qualifications, will surely devote more attention to the second language. But I think that if we can keep more than half of this 5 or 8 per cent in the Chinese schools, it will be more beneficial.

For this is the history of Singapore. In the colonial era, the colonial government could not care less as to whether your children had an education. That was not its problem. It built a small number of English schools. Why? To train a group of people to be their clerks and assistants.

Many civil organisations like the Hokkien Huay Kuan then tried to build their own schools to educate their children. The result is that today we have a dozen or so of comparatively outstanding Chinese schools with a relatively long history and staffed by teachers of fairly good quality. I think we have got to find a way to preserve these schools.

The Chinese School Teachers' Association has called for a change in the time allotted for the teaching of languages – to make it 50% for the mother-tongue and 50% for English. I think this proposal has been made too hastily. We ought to consider the matter coolly. The problem of language is not just one of learning time. I have just said that in language, you have to consider your background. If you speak English at home, you need not spend 50% of your time learning English in school. You don't need that much time at all – 30% will be enough. If Mandarin is spoken at home, it would of course take more time to learn English. Therefore, if we are able to use computers or other means to carry out a survey on the family background of all our students, we would be able to formulate a workable arrangement. In the case of primary schools, for example, if it is possible, we may send those students who are good in the

second language to Chinese schools. Then, after four or five years, the teachers would know which of the students would be likely to be proficient in the two languages and which of them will not make it. Those who can be proficient in two languages may remain in the Chinese schools. They can be admitted to the 12 best secondary schools where the teachers are qualified to teach languages. I think there are advantages in this approach because, in future, the leaders of our society, the leaders of government or of the various sectors, the managers – they will have the traditional norms, the oriental norms, in addition to the mastery of the science and technology of the West. I think every nation has to depend on its elite. They are important. If the elite is weak, the nation will collapse. This is fundamental. Once you prove that you can get into one of the 12 Chinese schools, you are definitely a student of calibre and your entrance to university is assured. I think every parent would then want to send his children to one of the 12 secondary schools.

Therefore, the problem is how to select these students. I think the choice could be left to the parents. The children should be admitted to the Chinese schools from primary one. We now have more than twenty of such schools. After 4, 5, or 6 years, those students who prove unable to acquire proficiency in two languages will be

switched to English schools. The outstanding students of English schools who proved that they are able to be proficient in two languages and, if their parents so wish, may, through the recommendation of their principals, ask for transfer to these 12 Chinese secondary schools. At a later stage, all the students will be integrated again when they reach the junior college level. I think this is a good solution. But this is only my view. Whether the parents would accept it will have to depend on whether this policy proves to be practical in 3 or 4 years' time.

Chairman: With regard to the goal of education, may I know if the four members of our panel have any other views? If not, we may proceed to discuss other issues.

Lim Nai

Tien: Mr Chairman, may I again bring up the point Professor Koh mentioned earlier. At present, many students have chosen to join the English schools. Mr Prime Minister, as you have pointed out just now, in the case of the English schools, 70% of the textbooks are in English. Then, naturally, it is much easier for the students to come under the influence of the English culture, of western culture;

as only 30% of their studies is in the mother-tongue, the influence of the mother-tongue is relatively little after all. The question I want to bring up is: Can we, through the various channels and various methods, also strengthen cultural education in the English-stream; that is, education in the oriental cultures. Perhaps there is a need for some adjustments to the curriculum. Mr Prime Minister, what do you think of this?

Prime

Minister: My view is this: If a student finds it easier to learn English because English is spoken at home and is also given importance in the school – 70%, then we would be in a position to introduce oriental cultures and history to him with English as the medium of instruction and help him understand them. For me personally, if I have a book to read, as in the case of 20 years ago when I brought a book written by Lu Shun – The Story of Ah Q, where there was both the Chinese and the English translation for comparison, I finished reading the English version very quickly and then proceeded to read the Chinese version, for which I had to look up the dictionary and it involved a lot of effort.

Therefore, this is a way out. For example, in the case of proverbs, common sayings, fables and folk tales, these may be introduced in English to enable the child to understand. If he does not understand, he will find it uninteresting and dull.

If 30% of his time is spent on Chinese, one does not expect him to become a linguistic expert: it is for him to learn the oriental norms and have a knowledge of history. At the primary school level, we now have Education for Living; this is taught in very simple language. For the secondary schools, I think we can let them read “The Story of the Three Kingdoms”, proverbs and various other interesting publications concerning the Chinese way of thinking of the past generations.

Content and language are two different things. The language is for you to express yourself. If the materials and the views are wrong, they will still be wrong no matter what language you may use to express them.

For instance, the fable of 赛翁失马，焉知祸福 (Who is to tell that it is not a blessing to the old man living at the border region

when he lost his horse), if you can explain the significance to him in English, he will find it most interesting. From there he can be motivated to learn Mandarin. This is a way out.

But you must understand that an English school student with an IQ of 100 is just an average student, not a very outstanding one. You have to concede that there is a limit to intelligence. So the more time he spends on one aspect, the lesser the change he will make good in another. The brain has its limits. So with the person's energy and the power of his memory. It is therefore not easy to reach an ideal solution.

How does one arrive at an ideal solution? First we have to take into consideration the background, the ability. There must also be good teachers. In deciding to send a student to a class of average students, you must be able to ascertain clearly that you are right in so doing. It needs a few years of tests before you can judge him.

Only in this way can you have a fair judgement of his ability. For those who fail – the 30% who cannot make it to secondary school – I have no doubt that they are able only to absorb one language and it must be Mandarin. For Mandarin is very close to the dialects. It is



not very difficult to understand what it means, even though there is no Mandarin equivalent for many dialect words. For example, there is no written character for the Hokkien “Ei Shai” ( meaning ‘can’ ) and “bue shai” ( meaning ‘cannot’ ). When I first started to learn Hokkien, I asked my teacher how “Ei Shai” was written and he said there were no such characters. But Mandarin and the dialects are more or less the same. He will be able to guess at the meaning.

The problem is: how can those students who are able to make it to secondary school but not to pre-university, make good use of their 30% time for the second language to learn the essence of Chinese civilisation – not just Mandarin, but also the thinking, the philosophy of life, the values, ethnics, virtues. That is the problem. I am not an education expert, so I am in no position to offer in detail any measure to deal with this problem. But I don’t think it will do just to lay stress on,

or attach importance to, the language. The emphasis must be on the content. Language is a means used to transmit the good norms: how to act as a good man. A good man is filial to his parents and loyal to his country. I think Confucianism still serves a useful purpose although it may not be suitable for our society in all aspects. So we must let them study it. For those who cannot read the classical Chinese, we can get it translated into English and use simple

Chinese for them to understand. Then they will grasp the spirit, the spirit of a civilisation.

Ung Gim

Sei: Mr Prime Minister, one of the points we have touched upon relates to the preservation of Chinese schools so that some of the elite emerging from these schools may become leaders of our society. We can be certain that these people will be imbued with a sense of social commitment or national consciousness which is characteristic of the orientals. That is no problem. The problem is that among the overwhelming majority of the English school students ( the 90% of our young people ), 40 to 50% are in the middle rung of the social ladder and will never make it to the top: will these people have the same ideological background as the leaders ( of our society )? This is of vital importance. We must therefore be able to see what would be the thinking of these people 20 or 30 years from now. For we will be in for a lot of trouble if the handful of leaders that we have created, when facing great difficulties, do not share the same sentiments or views of the great majority of the people. I imagine that these people in the middle rung will most probably come from the English schools. As things are (without increasing the teaching

time for languages in the English schools), I believe that there is still much more room for improvement to enable them to better master the second language. For example, as all of us are aware, there are some English schools which do not attach importance to the second language. The principal and the senior teachers know little about the second language and adopt a nonchalant attitude towards the teaching of the second language. In these schools, the second language does not warrant attention. Take promotion, for example; many schools do not require their students to pass the second language for promotion to the higher grade. This has made many students feel that the second language is something they can well do without. This is a problem. Just now you mentioned changing the contents of our curriculum. That is one of the solutions. Perhaps we can make some changes in this respect so that our students will be able to learn a bit of our culture through the mother tongue.

What are your views?

Prime

Minister: Your question may be divided into two parts. One part can be easily dealt with. For instance, about the attitude of principals and teachers; we in the Government are aware of this too. In selecting principals, we are now attaching much importance as to whether he

speaks a second language. If he does, he is more suited for the job of a principal. On the question of whether a student can move to the next higher grade if he fails in his second language, to stipulate that the second language is a compulsory and examination subject for promotion is a thing which can be done easily. The question is, what are you to be tested in an examination? To speak a few words? To write a few sentences? I think the problem lies with the qualities, attitudes and philosophy of life of the teacher. This is really a difficult problem to solve.

The teachers you had in school during your time and the teachers we have in our schools today are different because our society has changed. Over 20 years ago, you could easily distinguish English school teachers from Chinese school teachers. You could clearly see the difference from their attire. The English school teachers were better off, better dressed, and they behaved in a different way; the Chinese school teachers were serious looking and more conscientious in work.

Now, amongst the student teachers at the Institute of Education, you may sometimes find it difficult to distinguish the Chinese educated

from the English educated, and you can't really tell who are going to be teachers in Chinese-medium schools and who in English-medium schools. This is because our society has changed and developed. This problem is not easy to solve. In the course of my work, for example in approving the appointment of some people for official assignments abroad on behalf of our Government or appointing a member to the committee of a Government institution, I have found – from their curriculum vitae – that many of them had become teachers upon graduation from the university and then, after two or three years, on obtaining an honours degree or other qualifications, they would find other employment. This is not only a problem in Singapore but also in Japan. Britain is also facing the same problem.

National Archives of Singapore

With universal education, everyone has the opportunity to receive an education and this has changed the way of thinking. 20 years ago ... it was 40 to 50 years ago when I was in school ... At that time, the teachers were different from the teachers of today. A teacher was a man of great importance in the community. He had a high social standing because there were very few people who were educated and able to read. Therefore, teachers were the few knowledgable people. Today, things are different. You will notice this from the conversations of our students. Sometimes, overhearing the telephone conversations of my children, I realise that it is entirely different. One of my sons graduated recently. I have often heard him asking his friend, "What kind of job are you doing? Which department are you in? Oh, I see." What was that they were talking about? How to look for a job that is one, interesting; two, of considerable status, socially respectable, with good promotional prospects; three, how much does it pay per month. In the end, only very few who are qualified take up the job of a school principal working in education. This is a big problem. That's why we must recognise that firstly, we must try to find ways and means of absorbing some of those persons of calibre and make them school principals. These people need not be of exceptional intelligence or

National Archives of Singapore

inventiveness. All they need are personal qualities – that is, they should be of good character and have high ethics.

At the same time, they must be fond of young people, they must care for them and know how to cultivate them. Such people are not easy to come by. But we must find them. Otherwise, no matter how much money the Government spends on education, no matter how good the facilities provided – language centre, libraries, etc – we cannot succeed. That is why the most important factors are teachers and students. You may need the help of new techniques, such as new audio-visual aids. But it is the imparting of knowledge through personal contact from one who knows to those who do not, that is more important. If you are able to find such a person to become school principal, then the school will succeed. If the principal is assisted by a number of good teachers, then this school must be good. The problem is how to get such people and, after finding them, how to persuade them not to switch jobs for only more than a hundred dollars per month. For Government departments, there are rules and regulations to follow; fixed annual increments, promotion only after three to six years in service. But the younger generation does not have patience. He says: “You may not know

that my friend is now a lawyer and has made a fortune. He owns a Mercedes. Have you met him? He is indeed prosperous.”

I think this is a big problem. It is the same with every society. Do not think that we are the only people faced with such problem. Japan too, is facing such a problem. Because all the university graduates with good results manage to get into the big corporations, only those with average results become teachers. That is why their teachers have organised a trade union which is leftist because they are not happy. So is the case with Britain. Don't think society will remain unchanged. It changes every day. What never changes? Man's nature does not change. But lifestyles change continuously. Our policies too, must continue to adapt to new situation. Our objective, however, remains unchanged: how to nurture our younger generation. It is not merely by imparting knowledge to them. They must be taught at the same time what is moral and what is virtuous. The nature of man hundreds of years ago and that of man today remains unchanged. That is why the question you just raised may be divided into two parts. On the one hand, we can choose our school principals and attach importance to the second language. This is relatively easier to solve. But on the other hand,



there is the quality of the lecturers and teachers to be considered. There have been marked changes in the lecturers in the university. This is not just the teachers alone. It is the same with the university. You give the man a scholarship. When he has finished and come back, he has to serve for five years during which he will look for a better job. After five years, he will say good-bye to his job and start his own practice, especially in medicine. Take the case of the person who has done surgery, for example. After five years, he will say, "Well, I am quite well known now." There are lots of rich people in Southeast Asia, the millionaires and the multi-millionaires who know him. So this is a new problem. To put simply, we must continuously think of solutions. After a problem has been solved, if there is another problem, we must find another solution.

Chairman: Mr Prime Minister, can we change the topic now, please. The recent reform in Nanyang University has had considerable impact on some Chinese secondary school students. Mr Prime Minister, you have just referred to this problem. I wonder whether the four panel members here would like to speak on this aspect.

Lim Nai

Tien: Yes. Mr Prime Minister, the recent changes in the medium of instruction in Nanyang University and in the upper secondary schools will bring about changes not only in the text books of the upper secondary level but also in the text books of the lower secondary level in the Chinese schools. This is a question of linking up and fitting in. In order to link up with, and fit into, the medium of instruction for the subjects at upper secondary level, there may be changes in the subjects of the lower secondary level in that the medium of instruction may be changed to English. Will this then become inconsistent more or less with the present measures of bilingual education that we are talking about? In other words, in the not too distant future, there may be many Chinese secondary schools which may convert to English. Will this happen? And what is your view on this, Mr Prime Minister?

National Archives of Singapore

Prime

Minister: This is what I think of it. In Singapore, it will be difficult to maintain a purely Chinese school system like that we had more than 20 years ago – from primary through secondary and pre-u classes up to the university. Because you have to know two languages, the higher the educational level, the more difficult it is to achieve complete command of two languages. I think that for those brighter and gifted students, 70% or 80% of them will not have any difficulty using Mandarin from primary to secondary 4. But when they reach pre-u one and pre-u two, they must switch over to English. I give you an example. My elder son spent 12 years in a Chinese school, from primary one to pre-u two; but my second child, my daughter, told me that she wanted to switch over to English school after finishing secondary four because she wanted to do medicine. I asked her why, and she said that there were many terms, biological terms, on which she would need to spend a lot of time to learn by heart.

Chinese terms are different from English terms. My third child wanted to do engineering. He also told me that he wanted to switch to an English school. He studied in a Chinese school up to secondary four after which he said he wanted to switch over to an

English school while still continuing to study Chinese to take the Chinese examination. I think this is a problem and a fact that we must face. Recently, I bought an English-Chinese dictionary which I meant to give to my daughter because she said that it was very troublesome to translate Chinese terms and English terms. At that time I did not believe her. It was only after I had bought this dictionary that I realised that for every piece of bone, every muscle, there is a name. There could possibly be 5,000 entirely different names. In the case of bones, the Chinese had their names a few thousand years ago. So they would not want to follow the Western names, the latinised names. Once you have taken a look at that dictionary, you will understand how complex it is.

So the Chinese in Singapore must recognise that to facilitate the acquisition of knowledge in science and technology, we must learn English. But to hold onto our cultural heritage, oriental thinking and philosophy of life, we must learn Chinese. If one continues up to secondary four and takes Chinese in the examination at pre-u two, one would be 18 years old and I think one will never forget. We will have ways and means to give students such a foundation. In learning, whether it is learning a language or a subject, the learning

process is continuous. You cannot say that because you have reached a certain level and have graduated, then there is no need for you to learn any more. There are always new developments in every subject. You must keep on reading. What is the aim of education after all? It is to give the student the ability to read on his own and the interest to learn on his own, in later years. So to answer you simply, to maintain the standard of Chinese at the level of 10 to 20 years ago up to secondary four – I think we can do it, but it is possible only for those students with a higher I.Q. who can make it to the university.

Dr Gwee

Yee Hean: In terms of the recent switch in the medium of instruction at the pre-u level and the university, I think there should not be any problem for science students. As a matter of fact, English text books have generally been used by science students. The examples given by the Prime Minister just now were also related to science and medicine. But in the case of arts subjects, I think there are big problems. Perhaps these problems will become non-existent later on, but at the moment the sudden switch in the medium of instruction without a

transitional period is something which is not easy to adjust to in the case of children educated in Chinese.

Prime

Minister: What subjects are you referring to?

Dr Gwee

Yee Hean: The arts subjects – including economics, history and geography.

Prime

Minister: History, geography and economics. I think if we want to analyse every subject, then each will have its own difficulties. Take history, for example. What history? History of Southeast Asia? History of China? History of Europe? History of America, North and South America? Or history of the world? All these have their own problems and difficulties. If you take Chinese history, then it will be much easier and convenient to use the Chinese language because the names of people and places are the same. But if you take the history of West Europe, then we will have to use romanised or latinised names of places and people as I have seen in their textbooks where they use Chinese characters for European names.

It then becomes very complex. But what relevance has this? Here, language is only a tool. It is different from philosophy. Geography also has its own problems. If you ask me about economics, then I would say that it is best to use English because from the Second World War up till now, there have been great changes in economic theories. You can't use Chinese to express your views on what is written and analysed by Westerners. If you do so, you will lose the meaning. Then again, after graduating, what kind of journals and magazines analysing the world economy do you read? You will read the American magazines to get the weekly statistics, won't you? If you work in a bank, you would want to know of happenings in the financial market and in the money market in Tokyo today. Then what kind of papers will you read? Chinese papers? But Chinese papers get their news from where? From the agencies.

What language do the agencies use? English. The Chinese papers translate from the English. So what is the result? Why read the translated news? Isn't it better and more convenient to read the news in the original? So, as I said before, this is not purely a language problem. Language is for our traditional culture. In the case of new inventions and new knowledge, whatever language used will not pose any problem. Fortunately, in the field of science,

the Americans are superior for the time being. We were a former British colony. So we learned English. But it is not the influence of Great Britain which has given English the superior position. It is rather the influence of the Americans, and the American scientists. This is purely a coincidence. For example, if you are an Indonesian student, you would have come from a former Dutch colony. How troublesome! Or take the case of Laos, a former French colony, where some people can speak French. But the names of spaceships are not in French. They are either in Russian or English and American English.

Ung Gim

Sei: Mr Prime Minister, I agree with the view you have just expressed.

Now the problem and the difficulty is that students who have just passed out from secondary four and joined pre-u or students who are coming up from secondary one and secondary two will find it hard to switch from one medium of instruction to another medium of instruction all of a sudden.

This is my own experience. I studied economics after working for several years in a newspaper office. So I had a better grounding in



English before I went to the Singapore University. But I still found it quite difficult. In the case of secondary students now, studying subjects like economics and history has also involved the learning of a difficult language, because in history and economic analysis, there are always very abstract ideas. So the students are not just merely learning history and economics: they are also learning a very difficult language. So the difficulty here is very great and this is the main point that we are talking about.

Prime

Minister: That is the reason why I have said for acquiring new knowledge and if English is to be used in the university, then the earlier one learns English, the better. This is a practical way out. If you proceed to the university where you are suddenly confronted with English textbooks, then it will be very difficult.

National Archives of Singapore

Prof Koh

Lip Lin: Mr Prime Minister, just now Mr Lim and Dr Gwee referred to the impact resulting from the switch to English in the university and pre-u classes. I think those in the Chinese education circles are very concerned about this. Although this change had been expected, it has given rise to some sentiments of dissatisfaction and disappointment. Why is this so? I think we can say that generally, parents hope that their children will be able to go through the process of education smoothly from primary school through lower secondary and upper secondary up to the university. Although we know that there is only a small 5% who can make it to the university, every parent hopes that his child will come within this 5%. With the university and the pre-u classes switching to English, there will be a corresponding change at the lower secondary level.

While it is one thing for students to find it difficult to study, they will feel that if their English is weak, they will have no hope of going on for further studies. I remember that the Ministry of Education recently gave parents certain options – asking them if they would opt for one extra year in upper secondary. Singapore parents being so practical and realistic are not prepared to opt for one extra year. There is one important factor which the Prime

Minister mentioned earlier on and that is some parents have started to regret sending their children to Chinese schools, wondering whether they have made a mistake. In my contacts with friends among whom many still have their children in Chinese schools, I have discovered that many of them are thinking of switching their children to English schools after they have completed their primary education. Many of them are beginning to be rather anxious, wondering whether to step up the learning of English by giving their children private tuition in English. This seems to run counter to what the Prime Minister has just said about preserving some good Chinese schools. May I ask therefore, whether the Prime Minister has any remedy?

Prime

Minister: Remedy in what respect?

Prof Koh

Lip Lin: What I meant to say was whether we wanted the good students in the Chinese schools to switch over to English schools at secondary one, after completing their primary education.

Prime

Minister: I think those who have done well in the Chinese schools must continue in the Chinese schools. Those who have not done so well in the Chinese schools should be encouraged to switch over to English schools. That, I think, is a practical way out.

Prof Koh

Lip Lin: In the present situation, however, things are just going the opposite way. It is only those who have done well in the Chinese schools who are accepted for admission to the English stream to do secondary one.

Chairman: Mr Prime Minister, I think one of the problems you have brought up is how to turn Chinese schools into elite schools? Can we have a discussion on this?

## National Archives of Singapore

Prof Koh: That is, how are we going to convince the parents that they should keep their children in the Chinese schools at least up to the lower secondary level?

Prime

Minister: I think this problem can definitely be solved. The actual problem is whether we can guarantee that those students we keep in the Chinese schools are the able ones who are definitely proficient in two languages. If he does not have the necessary abilities, he should not be allowed to remain in the Chinese school. At the same time, in the case of the English primary school pupils, if they are able and wish to get admitted to these 12 Chinese secondary schools, these schools can then absorb them. Essentially, this is a question of the “chicken and the egg”. With good students and good graduates, the reputation of the school would become enhanced, and the more enhanced the school’s reputation, the more students would like to join it. How do we bring about this situation? I think it is very easy. We have about 12 good schools with a long history. If we can make it clear that only those who are capable and very likely to make it to the universities can enter these schools; that is to say, only the elite students will be picked to enter these schools, then with good students and good teachers, the results will necessarily be good. With good results, two or three years later, all parents will want their children, even those borderline students who may or may not master two languages, to get into Chinese secondary schools. They will do their best to find ways and means

to give their children a chance. At present, only a minority and the weaker students remain in Chinese schools. In future, we can reverse this so that the few who stay in Chinese schools are the stronger ones. This is a practical solution.

Thus, the elite of our country will be imbued with an oriental philosophy of life on the one hand and be able to understand and absorb the attributes of the West in science and technology on the other. They will absorb what is good and reject what is irrelevant to our society.

Chairman: Mr Prime Minister, I think we have to bring the first part of this forum to a close here. The Prime Minister has kindly consented to answer questions from members of the audience. You may now ask your questions.

National Archives of Singapore

**Question-and-Answer session following the panel discussion with the Prime**

**Minister on “Bi-lingualism”**

Dr Ang

Koh-Ping: I am Ang Koh-Ping of Nanyang University. You have just mentioned that about 90% of parents send their children to English schools. This tendency will increase. Though the Government encourages the use of Mandarin and parents who are Chinese educated speak to their children in Mandarin, still, because these children are sent to English schools, are educated in English, speak in English, they will naturally converse at home with their brothers and sisters, and find it convenient as well to speak to friends and schoolmates, in English.

## National Archives of Singapore

If the nature of the English schools and the contents of their curriculum remain unchanged, then in the next ten to twenty years, only a few people will be really bilingual, especially those who are fluent in both the spoken and written Chinese. Then, will Singapore become a monolingual society? Of course, I believe, given the

Government's efforts in implementing the bilingual policy, this kind of situation will not arise. What is your view, Mr Prime Minister?

Prime

Minister: I believe that it is impossible to turn Singapore into a monolingual society even if this was what we wanted. If we wanted to do so, we can send our children to families in America, England and Europe and when they come back, after 15 years, they will all speak English, and we can gradually achieve a monolingual society. But this is not practical.

Language is a habit. Children first listen to their mothers and then learn the language from them. In Singapore, I think the percentage of mothers who speak English at home will not exceed 15 to 20%.

Therefore, a monolingual society is not possible. You mentioned that the teaching in schools will lead to an English-speaking tendency, more and more students will converse with their schoolmates and brothers and sisters in English. This, I don't believe. This is not the real problem. Problems related to education are caused by the social environment, the social milieu. Therefore, no matter how perfect the arrangements we make for the



implementation of our educational policy, the expected result will not be achieved if the language habits are different. For example, the bilingual policy – originally, we had thought that with the teaching of English and Mandarin in schools, we would have, after ten to twenty years, our students speaking both English and Mandarin when they come out from schools. But this has not been the result: the language used varies. The majority of those who go to university are able to speak English; those who have finished their secondary education but who do not go on to university are divided into three groups: the English-speaking group (but they do not speak standard English); the Mandarin speaking and the Malay speaking group; and then those who fail the PSLE, who mostly speak dialect. We had never expected such an outcome. We have, therefore, I think, to correct it, step by step.

## National Archives of Singapore

We must have, at the same time, feedbacks. When we implement a new policy, we must have a survey of the results after a year and make corrections where necessary. I don't believe that Singapore will become only a bilingual society: because the Malays will speak Malay, you can't tell them that they must speak English. They also have 30% of their students who cannot master English, and they

have to turn to Malay. Therefore I believe this is the characteristic of Singapore – a multilingual society.

Chairman: Any other questions?

Dr Ker

Sin Tze: I'm Ker Sin Tze of the University of Singapore. Mr Prime Minister, I have two questions: First, to those who are English educated, the bilingual policy which you have emphasised or the use and learning of Chinese and Mandarin will be looked upon as an extra burden for them. Your Cabinet ministers, the Head of Civil Service, are mostly English educated. Their views may not be identical with yours. If this is so, the bilingual policy may not be implemented effectively. What practical steps do you think should be taken to promote the spoken Mandarin and written Chinese in government departments as a lead?

Prime

Minister: First of all, I would like to ask if you are Chinese educated?

Dr Ker: Yes.

Prime

Minister: What school did you go to?

Dr Ker: The Chinese High School.

Prime

Minister: And what primary school? Was it also a Chinese school?

Dr Ker: Chung Cheng School. I graduated from Nanyang University.

Prime

Minister: And then went to the University of Singapore?

Dr Ker: And then I went overseas for further studies. Now I teach in the  
University of Singapore.

Prime

Minister: Let me explain briefly. Among my Cabinet colleagues, only six of them still have children in schools. The Education Minister Mr Chua Sian Chin's children are in Chinese school; Mr Ong Pang Boon, half of his children are in English school and half in Chinese school. Mr Jek Yeun Thong's children are in English school. Mr Ong Teng Cheong's children are in Chinese school. I am not very clear as to the civil servants. As far as I know, my Permanent Secretary, Mr Howe Yoon Chong, received his primary education in Chinese; the former Chairman of the Public Services Commission sent his children to Chinese school; amongst my younger brothers and sister, one of them follows my example by sending the three children to Chinese school; they are bilingual, there is no problem. The other two have sent their children to English school, the last one sent his daughter to a Chinese kindergarten, she studied in a Chinese school from primary one to primary three, and then switched to an English school at primary four. I could not persuade even my own brothers: how can I dictate to my Ministers in terms of sending their children to Chinese schools? I think language and religion are emotional issues. We must follow free choice, let parents coolly consider in terms of their children's education.

At any rate, you must be clear in your own mind: you are educated,  
you went overseas for further studies ...

Dr Ker: Yes.

Prime

Minister: What country?

Dr Ker: I went to Canada.

Prime

Minister: Which state?

Dr Ker: Manitoba.

National Archives of Singapore

Prime

Minister: Then you would understand the big problem of Quebec – French and English. The problems are totally different in a monolingual society and in a multilingual society. There must be tolerance or else nothing can be done. For example, long ago, or say after independence, after separation from Malaysia, Singapore adopted different measures and policies. If because the Chinese were in the majority, we made Mandarin as our National Language, there would have been problems, and there would not be the Singapore of today. We would have become bankrupt. There would have been conflicts and chaos. That is why in Sri Lanka and India there are still problems.

Dr Ker: Because I'm at the University of Singapore, I have the opportunity to speak to those who are totally English educated. They generally agree that the Government is right in implementing the bilingual policy; but they feel that if they need only an English education to go from primary school to university and then onto a good job, why should they learn Chinese? They feel that speaking Mandarin or using the Chinese language is an additional burden to them. Let me give you an example. At Vancouver Airport or San Francisco

Airport, we see signboards in Chinese. This makes one feel at home. But when we arrive at Singapore Airport, we feel as if we have come to a foreign country. Elderly people who do not understand the signboards have to rely on foreigners to show them the way. I feel this is rather inconvenient. Mr Prime Minister, what is your opinion?

Prime

Minister: Did you say Chinese was used in San Francisco?

Dr Ker: At the Airport, Chinese is used.

Prime

Minister: Really?

## National Archives of Singapore

Dr Ker: Yes.

Prime

Minister: I think our problem is this: If we use Chinese, we must add Malay and Tamil as well. Otherwise, there is bound to be trouble. It would not be too difficult to insert Chinese into every form, every

road sign. But if you add Chinese, then you must add Tamil and Malay, and that would be too complicated. As for the Airport, we will ask them if they can put up Chinese signs as well.

Anyway, this is small matter. It is not a fundamental issue. The fundamental issue is: what kind of society do we want our children to live in? Is our society dynamic? Is its people industrious and united, able to overcome all difficulties? This is our fundamental issue. Your colleagues at the University of Singapore who had only an English education, probably do not understand the sort of spirit our people must have to survive in the long-term. If Singaporeans were to speak only English, discarding our own cultural heritage and traditional ideas, I think we would have difficulty overcoming our problems. In 1963, we merged with Malaysia. Two incidents took place. We separated from Malaysia in 1965. If Singapore had been an entirely English educated society, we would not have been able to ride out the storms and been able to build the Singapore of today. We have to have confidence, the will to sacrifice and the devotion to our cause; that is how we have achieved what we have today. The problems we face today are due partly to social changes and partly to the trend in our language education unconsciously inclining



towards English. For example, our carpenters, construction workers and technicians used to be Chinese educated. If you go to a construction site today, you still hear them speaking Mandarin. But they are not Singaporeans. It is of great significance – the willingness to sweat and toil – Singaporeans are different now. They are not prepared to sweat and toil: they let others to take up the tough jobs. Those people who work on our construction sites are Chinese educated. Education can influence one's thinking. We cannot ask all the English educated to accept the Government's policy totally. But I sometimes feel it is necessary to put down a ruling that if your child wants to go onto secondary school from primary school, he must reach certain standards in his second language. And similarly, a secondary student who wants to go onto Pre-University, must reach a certain standard. After two or three years, the same ruling would also apply in terms of entrance into University. They might disagree with such a ruling now, but after a while, if they are thoughtful enough, they will recognise that it is a right ruling.

Dr Ker: Mr Prime Minister, my second question is: you mentioned just now that if we let our people have their own choice, then the present

trend of sending children to English schools will continue.

Consequently, nobody will send their children to Chinese schools.

You said that this would be a result of parents' choice. But parents generally say they are forced to do so, that the increase of English school students is a result of planned arrangements on the part of the Government to induce parents to make this kind of choice. What practical measures would you take to allay this kind of doubt?

Prime

Minister: If parents think it is the Government's plan to induce them to send their children to English schools, all they have to do is to send their children to Chinese schools. That would defeat the Government's plan, and I don't have to be here today talking to you about this problem as I see it. It is not that simple. Every parent wants his children to receive an ideal and good education – to be proficient in English, satisfactory in Mandarin and to speak dialect fluently at home. If they are unable to attain this ideal, they will quickly modify their target. They will say, "Oh, can't help it. Let's drop Mandarin. Must get a good pass in English to get into University. As for dialect, it is used all the time at home. How can it be changed to Mandarin at once?" There is our problem. Every parent

has high expectations for his children. If they can't reach the highest target, they will lower it. Finally, they give up. And what do they give up? They try to satisfy both sentiment and reason: 情理兼顾 Their sentiment is to keep dialect and their reason is to master English. The rest can be given up. When Nantah decided to use English as the teaching medium, I found that unless we reviewed and discussed the fundamental principles and objectives of our education, unless we gave it thorough deliberation and made some sort of judgement, fifty years from now, we would have an English-speaking society. If the Government's aim is to have an English-speaking society, then there would not have been any need for me to bring up the question of dialect and Mandarin. I can just let the people continue to speak dialects freely. The result of our using more than ten dialects will be that English will become the lingua franca, and Mandarin will lose its role in society. Because I can see clearly that Mandarin should not lose its role in society, I want students to learn it at school. We must ensure that Mandarin has a significance in our society. I have 3 children. The eldest speaks Mandarin to his former schoolmates, English to his University schoolmates and officers in the Army. But he sometimes speaks Hokkien too. The second, a daughter, speaks Mandarin on

National Archives of Singapore

the telephone to her old schoolmates, English to her new schoolmates. So I asked whether there are Mandarin-speaking classmates in medical college. She said, "There are 3 or 4 of them." I asked her, "Are they old schoolmates?" she said, "No, they come from Chinese schools." So they speak Mandarin to each other. But now she has learn to speak Hokkien and Cantonese because patients speak dialects. She has asked me whether she should be a doctor or an interpreter. This is a real problem. My third child, a son, is the same as his brother: he also speaks Hokkien now. When he comes home from army camp, he sometimes uses Hokkien in telephone conversations. When I asked him why, he smiles and says, "Never mind, for convenience's sake. Otherwise, they will think I am too proud." This is one of the characteristics of the Singaporean: he often turns a weak point into an advantage. In the army, from the colour of a label, we know what dialect the bearer speaks. Those who speak neither English nor Mandarin wear red labels. My third son has told me that we have made a big mistake with this arrangement. I ask him why. He said, "They are very clever. If an officer asks one of them to do a certain piece of work, he will say he cannot understand because he wears the red label. But if he is told in English, 'You can take a day off', he will immediately go home."

So he does understand the language but he chooses to do so only when it is of advantage to him. That is why we want to gradually push them onto the right path, whether at school, in the army or in Government departments. But in individual homes, we cannot do anything about it because we are not the hosts. You are the master in your own house. You should decide what language is to be spoken at home. This is what matters.

Dr Ker: Thank you, Mr Prime Minister.

Mr Suen

Y-Chern: You have repeatedly analysed that the result of bilingualism is that about 5% to 8% of our people are proficient in two languages. Over 20% are competent in one language, but a large number of people cannot manage even one language. Is the government taking, or going to take, any measures to help them remedy the deficiency?

Prime

Minister: I hope that it won't happen again. We had automatic promotion in schools. Those who in primary one could not understand Mandarin or English, found it more difficult in primary two, and by primary three

they were totally at a loss. They failed the primary six examination – once, twice, thrice. That was the end of it. They ended up illiterate. Now the system has been changed. There is an annual examination. The principal is to decide: if a student is not qualified to be promoted, he must stay back; and to get promotion, he must pass both languages and his maths as well. If he can calculate and he can read, then he can pass. By doing this way, perhaps there will still be 20% who cannot get through primary six to go onto secondary one. For such students, special attention has to be given to their Mandarin because they mostly come from dialect-speaking families. They are more likely to manage Mandarin. As for English, they need only to understand and speak a few simple sentences. This will help them in their work. I hope this will help to solve the problem.

## Mr Sng National Archives of Singapore

Aik Liang: I am Sng Aik Liang of Nanyang University. First of all, I would like to bring up a few problems which may crop up in the joint university campus at Bukit Timah. My friends at the Singapore University told me that Chinese educated students in Sintah usually converse in Mandarin amongst themselves, and they tend to group together because they feel close to each other. Mr Prime Minister,

is there any way of changing this habit? Under the joint campus scheme, there will be 700 to 800 Chinese educated students who will join the Bukit Timah campus. If the speaking habit is not changed, this large group of Chinese educated students might turn the campus into a Mandarin speaking environment. On the other hand, under the joint examination scheme, Nanyang undergraduates, because of their language difficulty, will generally fare less well in their examination results; those in the Arts Faculty, especially, will be a great disadvantage. Will this leave the impression with the general public of further evidence that Nanyang graduates are inferior to Singapore University graduates, that they are second-class graduates? Can you please discuss this problem?

Prime

Minister: The first question is about the language speaking habits in the joint university campus. I hope all undergraduates will understand the aims of having such a campus. If for the sake of personal convenience, the Chinese educated students group together and bring about a segregation among students, we must do something about it. This is a bad sign. Our aim is to integrate the students. Those who come from Chinese schools understand English but feel a little uneasy speaking English. They are afraid they may not

pronounce correctly. You are a Nanyang University undergraduate.

What was your rank when you were in National Service?

Sng: I was an officer.

Prime

Minister: You speak English, don't you? After 2½ years in the army, you must be able to speak English. You have to. You managed to do it unconsciously. In the first 2 or 3 months, you might not have felt at ease but you had to break through this obstacle. If I had the feeling that my Mandarin is not fluent and that therefore I had better speak English, I would never have been able to do my job. Chinese educated students in the joint campus must always remember to make an effort to break through this obstacle – it is a psychological barrier. Frequent speaking will give you language fluency. As to your second question, I agree that Arts students will encounter difficulty and inconvenience in using the English language. Therefore those who cannot manage to express their thoughts in English in one year, let them stay on for another year. This cannot be helped. The English language should be learnt in the primary and secondary schools, not in the university. That is why we now want



to do something about upgrading the English standard in the schools.

In the army, there are a number of students who will be joining university this year. Two years ago, even those who did not do well in their English subject were accepted by Nanyang University. Now Nantah will provide special training for such students to improve their conversational English.

National Archives of Singapore

Those doing Economics may find it difficult to write a thesis or to participate in discussions in English. I think those who cannot improve on their English standard within one year must stay on to concentrate on the language.

I think we must face the reality in dealing with this problem. The easiest way out is to let Nanyang go on as it is. The result will definitely be fewer and fewer students from Nantah and more and more for the University of Singapore. The good ones all entering Singapore University, the weaker ones entering Nantah. After 4 or 5 years, because fewer and fewer students join Chinese primary and secondary schools, Nantah will become empty. The problem will then solve itself. That is why we must tackle the problem now. In science, one uses mainly symbols. There should be no difficulties.

I agree there is a big difficulty in the Arts. Economics, History, Geography, Political Science – all these Arts subjects need considerable vocabulary. But if you let the student graduate from Nantah, using Chinese, and he joins the government service, he may need 4 or 5 years to master English. The more intelligent ones may be able to achieve it in 3 to 4 years.

The question is whether there is opportunity for frequent usage.

Frequent usage ensures success.

Mr Ng

Kok Lip: I am Ng Kok Lip. Mr Prime Minister, I remember you mentioned before that if a child was exposed earlier, to a bilingual environment, he would be able to master two languages faster. Nowadays, the learning of two languages has indeed imposed an extra burden on the child. A student has to work extra hard, making extra effort if he is to do well in both languages. I have a suggestion to make. Can we lengthen our secondary and primary school years – say, primary schools from 6 to 7 years, or even 8 years. Or, instead of extending the number of years in school, we can increase the number of school days in a year, from 200 days to 250 days. In this way, students will have more time in school to study their two languages from an early age. Would you like to comment on this suggestion?

Prime

Minister: Your second suggestion, I think, will not be welcomed by people in the educational circles: from 200 days, increase to 250 days in a year. The educational experts will put up all sorts of reasons to explain why it will not work, reasons such as consideration for the growing child, insufficient accommodation in schools, etc. It will also bring about more problems for the teachers. But I think your first suggestion is feasible. The point is this: primary education can be extended by another year. The schooling age can be one year earlier. Now the starting age is 6. I don't know whether a child will be ready for school at an earlier age, say five and a half. In Britain, a child enters school at the age of five. So extending primary education from 6 years to seven years is feasible. This is a matter of time: there is the problem of more classroom accommodation and of more teachers. To add one more year to secondary education is a problem more difficult to solve. All parents want their children to pass out from school as early as possible. 5% to 8% of the students are able to pass out from secondary schools in 10 years, well versed in both languages. I think we should allow them to continue to do so. Let those who can make it in 10 years proceed to pre-u classes. Those who cannot

make it, study for one more year. But a study must be done as to what arrangements can best be made: whether we should have four years of secondary education for all and allow those who are weaker to repeat one more year in secondary four or whether we should spread the curriculum over 5 years. I am not an educational expert. Let the experts in the Education Ministry solve this problem. I think it is a good suggestion.

However, I want to stress again – language is closely linked to our daily life. Do not think that once you have learnt it, you can use it immediately, at any time. That is only an illusion.

The language you learn at an early age, the earlier you learn the more easily you can understand and speak with facility. I often talk to many ambassadors. I always ask what languages their children learn. They tell me that it is easy to learn a foreign language, but it is just as easy to forget it. Unless you learn it up to 17, 18 or 19 years of age, you are sure to forget it. If you have learnt it up to 18 or 19 years of age, you may temporarily forget it, you may not be able to recall it immediately, but you can pick it up again quickly and recall it within one or two days. Therefore, the question is:

whether every student should be forced to acquire a good foundation so as to be able to speak, understand and write Mandarin and English. After that, whether you use it or not is up to you. But when there is a need for you to use it, the foundation is there. It is always there in your mind.

But, there is another problem in having a system of 5 years of secondary education. Many students will say, "I want to enter the Polytechnic on the fifth year and you are forcing me to stay for another year. Why must I miss one year of employment opportunity?" I think we have to solve this gradually. We could offer them the alternative of either staying on for another year in secondary school or going into the Polytechnic and earning earlier.

Madam Lee

## National Archives of Singapore

Sai Yong: Prime Minister, I am Lee Sai Yong. I am a parent. I would like to ask a question. Singaporeans are very value-conscious. If the learning of a second language does not serve a practical purpose in a person's job or in his advancement, he will not actively learn a second language. Therefore, to make the bilingual education policy a success, can the Government take certain steps to ensure, for

instance, that when some organisations recruit new staff, priority is given to those who are bilingual?

Prime

Minister: This is a good way and is practicable. We can make preparations for this. When the ruling on the second language for secondary four students has been fully implemented, all applicants for government posts must have attained good results in their second language. But I want to repeat here that if his work does not require him to use the language, he is bound to forget it. Only frequent usage will improve one's language competence. You must know this (Chinese) idiom 熟能生巧 -- "Frequent usage leads to subtlety". If you are able to speak English, then speak to your children in English at home. If you speak Mandarin, then speak Mandarin to them. Use it everyday and you won't forget it. This is common knowledge. Recently, I had a conversation with the President of Sri Lanka. I met him at a conference in Sydney. When he stopped over in Singapore, I asked him, "Do you use English during election time? He said, "No. I use only Ceylonese." I told him, "You speak such fluent English." His parents are highly educated. They engaged a tutor from England to coach him in English from the age of five. That is why he is so

fluent in English. I asked him, “Did speaking Ceylonese continuously for 5 or 6 weeks during the election affect your facility in English?” He said, “Yes, for the first one or two days afterwards.” This is quite common. That is why, when I go abroad, I always select one member to speak to me in Mandarin every day. In this way, I will not forget the language. Every time we meet, he speaks Mandarin to me and I will reply in Mandarin. I also spend 20 minutes a day reading a book. This will ensure I will not be tongue-tied in Mandarin. Otherwise, I will become less fluent in Mandarin when I return. And that will be troublesome. This is the problem in a multilingual society. Speaking one language is naturally more convenient than speaking two languages. But it is not only a matter of convenience or inconvenience but one of survival. This is the more serious issue. I think to survive, we must preserve our traditional thinking, we must have confidence in ourselves and have self-respect. I have been to a number of countries. The people there all speak English, but a kind of English which you and I cannot understand. It is their colloquial language. They have no self-confidence, no self-respect. They have lost their roots.

National Archives of Singapore



When I was in London in 1946, 1947, I used to visit a club called The China Club. All students of Chinese origin could go to the club. The tea and cakes sold there were very cheap. That was why it was popular. After being there for some time, you could tell when a Chinese student came in, whether he was from China, Southeast Asia, Hong Kong or the West Indies. You did not have to wait for him to speak to tell it. From his appearance, you could make a fairly accurate guess. They all had Chinese faces, but their dress, their behaviour were not the same.

At that time, I discovered that those who were severed from their roots had lost their self-respect. They had an inferiority complex. This makes it difficult for one to do one's job. When you are doing a job and are faced with problems and you have no self-confidence – instead, an inferiority complex – you are bound to fail.

Mdm Lee: Prime Minister, do you think it is possible to carry out such measures as giving priority to bilingual applicants for posts in government departments?

Prime

Minister: I think it definitely can be done. Such a measure must be carried out. But don't think that when this is carried out that the problem is solved. It hasn't been solved.

Mdm Lee: Why?

Prime

Minister: This is a measure to force him to learn, the so-called social pressure. But if he is stubborn, his attitude will be, "Well, if you want me to pass the subject before I can have the job, I will pass it." He passes it. After that, the certificate is thrown away. That's all. Nothing can be done about it. This is a question of the mind. But once a person realises that this is related to his future and the future of his children, then the thinking will be different. Then he will say, "Nobody has persuaded me (to learn). This is from my own observation, my own study, and my own judgement. We must do this or else we will fail."

What you suggest, we can accept. But that does not solve the fundamental problem. The fundamental problem is what was raised by the lecturer from Sintah. Many of his colleagues thought there was no need to add to the burden of their children. Unless the person has deeply thought, you cannot convince him.

I will give you another example, an opposite example. This shows a person's philosophy of life and his attitudes. I met a multi-millionaire. He is not a Singapore citizen. He is a Chinese by origin. He sent his daughters to Europe to study. But in the end, two or three of them married foreigners. I wanted to tell him, "What a pity." But I thought it was not nice to say so. So I asked him, "What is your reaction? How did you try to persuade them not to do so?" He told me what he said to his daughters – "Perhaps you think, now, this is personal. You like this way of life. But when you reach 40, you will realise this is not a problem easy to solve." I think this man is perceptive.

Children do not understand things: we must help them to deal with problems. But I expect parents to be perceptive. They can solve their children's problems, and not rely entirely on the government.

Miss Lim

Gek Khim: I am Lim Gek Khim from Sintah. You mentioned just now about the need to foresee what our society would be like in future. With the implementation of the bilingual policy, Mandarin will gradually take the place of dialects, English will also become the main language; then, in the near future, what sort of a Singapore cultural outlook will emerge? Also, will this be the type of culture that we want to have for our Singapore?

Prime

Minister: If our policy is dealt with properly, 20 years from now, I think 70% or perhaps 80% of the people in Singapore will be able to speak English. When a Chinese meets a Malay or Indian, he will definitely speak English. Only those 20% who fail to pass their primary school leaving examination will not be able to do so. In places where Chinese meet Chinese, they will all converse in Mandarin, be it in shops, restaurants, buses or taxis, wherever they meet, whatever they talk about. It will be much easier. 30, 40, 50 years from now, what Singapore will be depends very much on what the world may become. I think English will still be very important. American scientific advancement has been significant. Other

countries will also advance. Singapore must maintain good relations with all countries, whether big or small. I believe those who learn Mandarin will not be at a disadvantage.

Miss Lim: What I said about the cultural aspect includes religion, custom, etc.

Prime

Minister: In the field of culture, it is very hard to predict. Take the case of the Chinese; we cannot entirely preserve the whole book of old virtues. 20, 50 years ago, a man did not choose his own wife. It was decided by his parents. Today, it is different. This is a natural social change. But the basic virtues – how to be a good person, what is a good woman and a bad woman – will not change. If we are to follow the West, we will fail.

## National Archives of Singapore

Modes of social conduct and attitudes cannot remain unchanged.

There is no way to keep them unchanged, whether it is in China or India. The China of our ancestors is different from the China of today. But Singaporeans of Indian and Chinese origin when compared with the people of India and the people of China are more conservative, especially in morals and rituals. There is a kind of

built-in defence mechanism for survival amongst immigrants.

Because when you are in a new environment, you see all kinds of different things you are unaccustomed to, and you will try to preserve, as far as possible, the traditions which ensured the survival of a people for several thousand years. So when you ask me questions related to culture, I say it is difficult to predict. But, if we do not discard our language, traditions and virtues, we are sure to retain the greater part of our basic philosophy of life.

Madam Shi

May-Chiau: I am Shi May-Chiau, a teacher in Seh Chuan High School. Mr Prime Minister, if I remember correctly, you have always advocated that the ideal education for a person is to have mother tongue education at the primary school level. For instance, the Chinese students go to Chinese schools. And if there is someone who speaks English at home, then his child can even continue his study till he passes the Chinese secondary four.

In fact, your children have all successfully realised your idea. This has also proved that your idea is correct. Now, may I ask, if necessary, Mr Prime Minister, can you make this a lead for our parents?

Prime

Minister: I have already said just now, of my three younger brothers, one younger sister, two followed me, but the others did not. Many parents have said to me: "Of course you can do it!" What they meant was that my children are more intelligent, they can make it, that's why. But this is not my starting point. Intelligent or not intelligent, that's a different question. If he is cleverer, he can acquire a larger vocabulary. If he is an ordinary student, his vocabulary will be less. For instance, for the Chinese middle four student, for the first language, his vocabulary might comprise of 3,000 words, for the second language, about 2,000 words. There is no problem that he can speak quite fluently. The only thing is that when he is small, he is young and he listens frequently, he will produce naturally, the same sound, the same intonation. But how could you force other people to do it this way if they are afraid that in so doing, they will prejudice their children's future? So I think I

might as well let them do what they like. There is nothing that can be done. The only thing is: every parent must help his own child. If you are able to speak English and you send your child to an English school, he will have no problem with his English. At home he speaks English and in school he also speaks English. But he will loss the chance of learning to speak Mandarin.

I think the current trend is difficult to reverse. But if some brilliant students were to go into Chinese schools, after 3 to 5 years, people's attitudes towards, and impressions of, Chinese schools will definitely change. This change will take place. Prestige or influence will not always stay the same. For instance, before the war, you would have said Japanese products are no good. But the Japanese were not discouraged. They said "Well, if you say our cars are no good, we will improve them." Before the war, nobody bought their cars. But today, many people think that their cars are the best. They are very competitive in export. Similarly, today there are many people who think that Chinese schools are no good. But in 5 years' time, if we manage to take in outstanding students, and send a group of outstanding teachers to the 12 Chinese secondary schools, people's attitudes will definitely change. But the

National Archives of Singapore



present trend has taken place after 19 years. If you intend to change it, it will take 4 to 5 years to see results.

Prof Teh

Heng Hoon: Prime Minister Lee, I'm Teh Heng Hoon from Nanyang University.

At the beginning of this forum, you said that you were not satisfied with the implementation of the bilingual policy. Then you spoke about the important role of a teacher. You stressed that even with the best educational objectives, the best educational methods and the best of facilities, our education might still fail if there are no outstanding teachers. So you said the most important thing is to absorb and to retain the outstanding teachers. I myself am a teacher, I naturally agree very much with this view. But in Singapore, there is a view at present that there is not much of a prospect in being a teacher. I don't know what ways and means you have of changing this view. Otherwise, if there are no good teachers, no matter how good the policy is, it cannot be implemented.

National Archives of Singapore

Prime

Minister: This is a difficult problem. One factor is that we must take in good teachers. Then we must distinguish what makes a good teacher. That is, he must have ability, drive, knowledge, integrity and good character. He need not be extraordinarily brilliant. But he must set an example: that is very important. I think that the school principal is a very important job, because he leads the whole school. The position of the principal should be upgraded. So also his social status. And if you want to upgrade his position, you must give him some nominal raise either in the form of a special allowance or other form. This is also to match his social prestige.

The problem of teachers cannot be solved easily. The problem is that there are too many students switching from Chinese schools to

English schools. The result is a shortage of teachers in English schools; too many Chinese school graduates who want to be

teachers but there are no vacancies. This is a transitional period.

After 5, 7 or 9 years, this will level off. There is a need to raise the standard of education. At the same time, we must encourage good teachers to stay on as teachers. Good teachers do not mean those who are brilliant, those who did very well in their examinations; but

those who have a heart, who care for their students, who nurture and encourage them. We must have a way of giving recognition and encouragement to this kind of teachers for his efforts. I think it will take 10 years to solve this problem. But we must start rectification now.

Mr Hee

Pheng Fong: Prime Minister Lee, in the English forum, you said that given the bilingual policy, we will only lose the gloss of the Chinese written language. To ensure that we do not lose the Chinese language is our duty. You also stressed just now the importance of the cultural heritage, the “root”. But at present, the reality is that most parents are concerned about the future of their children and are sending them to English schools. In looking for a job in the commercial field, in the economic field, in government and even in the international political arena, English plays a very important role. In contrast, the Chinese language has a very small practical value. So, if this situation develops further, Mr Prime Minister, don’t you think that one of these days, what we will lose is not only the gloss of the language but also the language itself – even its “roots”? And could

this tendency, this situation, under the language policy, with the help of the mass media, be changed, be reversed?

Prime

Minister: I'm sure it can be done, and should be done. The trend is there; that is, for the sake of convenience, more and more people are speaking less Mandarin or learning less Chinese.

You said sooner or later, our society will become a totally English-speaking society. I don't believe so. This is impossible. I will give you two reasons. One, 20% of the people are not able to converse with you in English. You have to speak to them in Mandarin. Two, the elite – if you nurture this elite – their thinking will be oriental.

They are sure to preserve part of their original characteristics,

because this is the only way. If we lose our special characteristics, how are we going to survive?

At any rate, the question is: "Who are you? Who am I?" You say, "I'm a Singaporean". But Singaporean of which racial group?

There are Indians, there are Malays, there are Ceylonese; but 75% are Chinese. I think the traditional thinking is a very precious thing.

It must be preserved. If those in the elite group think this is insignificant and that this is an unnecessary burden, then Singapore will be bound to fail. If this is lost, there will be no drive, no self-respect.

Mr Hee

Pheng Fong: What I meant was that under the strong pressure of such a trend, will the elite also make necessary adjustments?

Prime

Minister: I hope that if we do things rightly, if we correctly carry out our tasks and make proper arrangements, then the thinking, the analytical approach of our successors will more or less be the same as ours. Ours is a one-man one-vote political system, and this plays a very important part.

National Archives of Singapore

For example, in the recent election, we selected a new candidate. He is very capable but he did not learn his Mandarin well. He did not attach importance to his Mandarin previously. Once the examination was over, it was over. But, having gone through the election, his attitude changed. He has now engaged a tutor to help

him pick up again his Mandarin. I said: "Good, it's best that you improve on it because, when you visit your constituents, when you go about meeting them, you will better understand their family background."

But where is the biggest problem? The existence of dialects is a danger because if you can conveniently speak Cantonese or Hokkien, you need not have to use Mandarin. Instead, you can speak intimately with others in Cantonese or in Hokkien. This is very dangerous. We must think of a way to popularise Mandarin.

Mr Loo

Shaw Chang: Mr Prime Minister, I am Loo Shaw Chang of Nantah. My question concerns higher education. The present situation is: we have two universities, we already have a joint campus. If we believe this sort of campus system could succeed, then the language problem will resolve itself. But the subsequent problem, maybe it's merely a conjecture but it could happen, is the language change. There will be fewer and fewer people going to Nantah, especially the brilliant students. It is meaningless to set up a university merely for training a group of students of lower quality. Even if our problem regarding

a joint campus is resolved given the present trends, the situation would appear to be going from bad to worse. We would like to ask, Mr Prime Minister, could we do the same thing with the institutes of higher learning as with the secondary schools? That is, if possible, letting the bright student go to Nantah and the weaker Chinese educated students go to the University of Singapore? Could we, for example, also let some good English educated students go to Nantah or set up some new facilities or whatever it is. I would be interested to hear your views, Mr Prime Minister.

Prime

Minister: You are from the Language Centre? So this problem has nothing to do with you personally?

Loo Shaw  
National Archives of Singapore

Chang: I am trying to reflect a general opinion.

Prime

Minister: First, we must make it very clear that the question of Chinese secondary schools and that of Nantah students are two different matters: they are not related because if the new system succeeds, students are mixed together in the pre-u classes or in the junior colleges. When selecting a university, they will look for good professors. If both universities are of the same standard, the student will first decide the course he wants to take and then he will look for the good professors.

Can Nantah attract good students? It all depends on whether the professors can draw the students to them. Once you have equal standards, whatever degree you have, be it a Nantah degree or a Sintah degree, it will be the same. If you pass, you pass. Whether you obtain a first or second in your honours degree, they are the same and equal.

I think it will take a long time to solve this problem. For example, in Sintah, there may be a lecturer who cannot be promoted to a professorship because to be a professor, you have to be 40 years old. But he is only 35 years old, so he has no hope of a promotion.



But this lecturer is of high calibre. If Nantah has a vacancy, he may go over to Nantah and become a professor. The students will follow him. This kind of thing is very common.

It also happens on Oxford and Cambridge or even in London University or in the best universities in the United States of America. Students are looking for good teachers. People always ask, "Who is the teacher?"

In short, it is also a problem of the chicken and the egg. You want me to solve this problem of the chicken and the egg? I think it is too late, I am not so energetic. It will need time to solve the problem, step by step; slowly.

As regards the joint campus, in the same campus, a student will differentiate who is a lecturer or a professor of high calibre and who is not.

Students are very sensitive. For his own sake and to save time, he will ask, "Whose class would you like to attend? Ah! His class! It is just wasting time, you might as well bring a book to read. Do not

waste time when he is lecturing; you just read your own book, or do some homework.” Students are very sensitive. In a year, two years or over three years, whatever you do, every student will know of your reputation as a professor or as a lecturer in the junior college. Take my own daughter, for example. She said: “I heard this doctor is leaving the university to open his own clinic.” I asked, “Who told you?” She said: “Oh, all the students feel sorry about it and disappointed because he is the best.” Students are very sensitive. Singapore has many hospitals – there are six, seven or eight but there are three to four main ones. Every student knows who is a good teacher and who is wasting his time.

Singapore is a small island. It is very easy for the students to find out whether you are good or bad. Therefore, you cannot hide your shortcomings.

National Archives of Singapore

So I say you must solve your own problem. Good professors will have good students. And good students will have good professors. This will enhance the reputation of both.

Dr Mok

Seow Koon: Mr Prime Minister, I am Mok Seow Koon of Nanyang University. I think if the policy of bilingualism is successfully implemented, the students in general and the pre-u students or undergraduates in particular, will find no difficulty in understanding or speaking their mother tongue or in English. But they might find it difficult to write, because what their home can best provide is the environment for them to listen to, and speak in, the mother tongue but not for them to learn to write. This has resulted in a drop in the standard of writing of his own language. What remedial steps do you think can be taken?

At the same time, if we are over-exposed to English, we may – as Professor Koh has said – be exposed too much to the influence of Western culture and lifestyles, which might not be desirable. Then how are we going to measure the advantages and the disadvantages, the benefits and the damage?

Prime

Minister: Writing is not a problem; it is easy to solve. You have to write constantly.

In many government departments, there are many graduates from Chinese schools. We have those from senior middle three of the old system. Mr Teh Cheang Wan of Housing and Development Board is one of them. He passed his senior middle three. I asked him: "If I were to ask you to write a letter in Chinese, can you do it?" He said laughingly: "No. For the past 12 years, I have seldom used Chinese." But I said: "Did you find it difficult reading?" He said, "No problem."

Therefore, you must write frequently. I always stress this point: unless you constantly use your pen, you will lose your capability to write. I do not know how else to solve this problem.

Chairman: Our forum must come to an end. Of course, this forum will not

National Archives of Singapore  
solve the problems related to the policy of bilingualism. But we have discussed them at quite great length. After all, education is a long-term matter. It is, as a Chinese saying goes "A great deed of thousand years ( 千秋大业 )". There is also another Chinese saying: "It takes a decade to grow a tree, and a century to cultivate a people ( 十年树木, 百年树人 )". We hope this forum will have the effect of bringing out many ideas, of stimulating more

people who are concerned with our bilingualism policy, to continue the discussion. Perhaps some contributions could be drawn from the discussions so that our policy of bilingualism can be better implemented and its aims more fully achieved.

Mr Prime Minister, thank you for giving us your precious time to answer questions which are of great concern to many Mandarin-speaking people.

May I, on behalf of TV Singapore and all of us here, express our gratitude to you. Thank you.

Prime

Minister: Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore