

LKY bilingualism fund stands at \$119m

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THE Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism – set up just over seven months ago by Singapore's founding prime minister to promote bilingualism among the young – currently stands at \$119 million, and counting.

This is well above its initial target of \$100 million, and includes a dollar-for-dollar matching grant of up to \$50 million by the government.

The endowment fund has since been set up as a company limited by guarantee, with both Charity and Institution of a Public Character status.

Heading its five-member Investment Advisory Committee is Ng Kok Song, the group chief investment officer of the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation.

Mr Ng's team has already started work on investing a portion of the fund, said fund treasurer Wong Kang Jet, the director of finance and development at the Education Ministry (MOE).

It was Mr Lee who kick-started the fund when he launched his latest book, *My Lifelong Challenge: Singapore's Bilingual Journey* last November. He made the first pledge of \$10 million from his own pocket and a further \$2 million from the sale of 200 autographed copies of that book.

Donations have since poured in from both organisations such as the Singapore Tote Board and Kwam Im Thong Hood Cho Temple and well-known business leaders such as Li Ka-shing, Rob-

ert Ng, Robert Kuok and Ong Beng Seng.

With the resources firmly in place, the fund is now ready to put some of that money to good use. The public has been invited to submit proposals on how to better promote bilingualism among children here.

For a start, the fund's board wants to focus on initiatives for pre-schoolers, which would include children at nursery and kindergarten levels.

The fund is encouraging co-ownership of these projects, and preferences will be given to those that are co-funded.

"We want to place the utmost emphasis on the quality of proposals. What we hope to see are impact and very positive outcomes for our young learners," said the fund's vice-chair Sim Ann yesterday.

"We are not limiting ourselves at this stage to pre-conditions on how much to fund and proportions. We want to look at the quality of proposals first," said Ms Sim, who is also the Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Education and Law.

Ms Sim, incidentally, also heads the eight-member Bicultural Taskforce, set up last year to spearhead the government's drive to connect more closely with the Chinese community and promote Chinese language and culture.

MOE's director-general of education Ho Peng, who chairs the fund's project evaluation committee, said that it was "quite likely" that some proposals would get started in 2013.