

# Bilingualism fund raises \$113m, beating target

■ BY PHUA MEI PIN

IN LESS than four months, the Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism has gone from \$10 million to \$113 million, exceeding its goal of \$100 million.

The \$113 million in pledges come from individual and institutional donors, the Ministry of Education (MOE) said in a statement yesterday.

It also announced the 16 members of the board that will administer the endowment fund, with Education Minister Heng Swee Keat as chairman, and Senior Parliamentary Secretary Sim Ann as the vice-chairman.

The fund is to promote bilingualism in the young.

It was mooted by former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew last November at the launch of his book *My Lifelong Challenge: Singapore's Bilingual Journey*, and he made the first pledge of \$10 million.

The latest tally includes another \$2 million from the sale of Mr Lee's book and a dollar-for-dollar matching grant of up to \$50 million by the Government.

In its statement, the MOE said the board will lead initiatives to support the teaching and learning of English and mother-tongue languages, especially at the preschool level.

Its members come from community groups, academia, the public service and the media, and includes experienced practitioners as well.

They include NTUC Childcare's honorary adviser Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Singapore Press Holdings' chief executive Alan Chan, Associate Professor Hadijah Rahmat from the National Institute of Education and Associate Professor Chitra Sankaran from the National University of Singapore.

Mr Heng said the board would study how to use the funds raised to achieve the greatest impact.

It will do so through four sub-committees: an international advisory panel, project evaluation committee, publicity and outreach committee, and investment advisory committee.

While the first three sub-committees are chaired by board members, the one on investment will be chaired by Government of Singapore Investment Corp's group chief investment officer Ng Kok Song, who is not a board member.

Said Mr Heng: "I am confident that we can raise the quality of teaching and learning of mother-tongue languages in preschools and help our children develop a love for bilingual learning."

In a separate statement, Ms Sim said a bicultural task force that she heads will submit ideas from its outreach activities to the fund for evaluation and financial support.

The task force, with eight People's Action Party MPs, aims to connect with the Chinese community and promote Chinese language and culture.

Looking ahead, Nanyang Technological University Emeritus Professor Eddie Kuo, who is also a member of the board, said: "We are not just talking about schools. I would also emphasise the role of the family and the media. And our effort has to be sustained for the long term."