

# \$500k for bilingualism fund, thanks to book orders

■ BY CAI HAOXIANG

MORE than \$500,000 is set to be raised for a new fund set up by former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew to promote bilingualism among preschoolers.

The sum is from the orders of 52 signed copies of Mr Lee's latest book, which is being sold for at least \$10,000 each.

The book, *My Lifelong Challenge: Singapore's Bilingual Journey*, documents his 50-year struggle to transform Singapore from a diverse people, speaking many different languages and dialects, in-

to a nation where everyone speaks both English and a mother tongue language.

It tackles controversial issues such as the closure of Nanyang University and the resistance of some communities and groups, as well as the introduction of the Speak Mandarin Campaign.

It is also the story of Mr Lee's struggle to learn Chinese, which began when he was six years old and his Hakka maternal grandmother enrolled him in a Chinese class with fishermen's children.

On hearing Mr Lee describe his experiences in learning the language at the book launch on Monday, businesswoman Jen-

ny Bi, 48, decided to buy a signed copy immediately.

"I empathised with Mr Lee's experiences. It is not an easy task to get an individual to study two languages, what more implementing a bilingual policy for an entire nation," she told *The Straits Times* in Mandarin.

The China-born Ms Bi said her 10-year-old daughter grew up in the United States and was not keen on Chinese because the English-speaking environment was not conducive to the learning of the language.

"But when she came to Singapore two

years ago, her Chinese improved. Here, she has Chinese-speaking playmates and attends daily Chinese lessons, and I can also teach her the language," she said.

Another buyer of a \$10,000 signed copy was Mr Godwyn Lim, a 35-year-old Singaporean who is chief executive officer of the Godwyn Group of Companies, a multinational consultancy with offices in China.

"I know how hard it is to learn Chinese, but I always remember that if Mr Lee can learn Chinese, I can also do it for my business.

"The bilingualism fund will allow fu-

ture generations to gain a competitive edge as they face the rising economies of China and India," he said.

Published by Straits Times Press and *Lianhe Zaobao*, the book is available in English and Chinese. It comes with a DVD containing extracts from speeches by Mr Lee in English, Mandarin, Hokkien and Malay over the past 50 years.

Both editions of the book, sold at major bookstores, are priced at \$39.90.

Mr Lee is signing 200 copies, each going for at least \$10,000, to raise \$2 million for the fund, on top of his personal donation of \$10 million.

Those who are interested in buying the signed copies may call Straits Times Press at 6319-8347, or e-mail [stpressbooks@sph.com.sg](mailto:stpressbooks@sph.com.sg)

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