

# Lee Kuan Yew's 'most important book' out \$100 m fund set up to promote bilingualism

**F**ORMER prime minister Lee Kuan Yew has set up a fund with a target of \$100 million to spearhead initiatives to teach young children their mother tongue from their pre-school years.

It will be called the Lee Kuan Yew Fund for Bilingualism and will administered by the Ministry of Education.

Mr Lee said: "However difficult to learn the mother tongue, especially Chinese (together with) English, if children start early enough, from Kindergarten 1 or even nursery, by Primary six, they will be bilingual, with a strong foundation in the mother tongue for life."

He will kick start the fund with a personal donation of \$10 million, with another \$2 million coming from the sale of signed copies of a book he launched yesterday.

Among those donating to the fund are property tycoon Philip Ng, who has pledged \$5 million and hotelier Ong Beng Seng, who has pledged \$2 million.

The book, titled *My Lifelong Challenge: Singapore's Bilingual Journey*, is also available in Chinese.

It documents Mr Lee's struggle, spanning half a century, to transform Singapore from a former British colony where many languages and dialects were spoken, into a united nation where everyone could speak both English and his or her mother tongue.

At the launch event at the Singapore Conference Hall, Mr Lee called it "my most important book".

In addition to discussing the thinking behind bilingual policy in Singapore over the years, Mr Lee also addresses such issues as the decline of Nanyang University and why he later started Special Assistance Plan schools.

It also describes his personal discovery of how important learning Mandarin was to his identity as an ethnic Chinese.

You can buy copies of the book at [www.stpress-books.com.sg](http://www.stpress-books.com.sg)