

Headline	KISS (Keep it short and simple) the big words goodbye		
Date	3 July 2003		
Media Title	The Straits Times	Section	Home
Page No	H6	Size	4colx14.5cm

KISS (keep it short and simple) the big words goodbye

This year's Speak Good English campaign aims to guide people in using simple words and help improve their language skills

By **ALEXIS HOOI**

HERE'S one way to propose marriage: "Bearing in mind all the minefields that we've negotiated since we embarked on our liaison and seeing as how congenial we have become on a quotidian basis, I was ruminating on perhaps celebrating our nuptials sometime this year?"

Here's the simpler way: "Will you marry me?"

The two examples are featured in a TV commercial with real-life couple Andrea De Cruz and Pierre Png, both television celebrities.

After concentrating on getting Singaporeans to understand the importance of speaking standard English rather than Singlish, the three-year-old Speak Good English Move-

ment now wants to guide them in how to do it.

The message for the year-long campaign: Speak English simply, without using "big words".

Said the chairman of the movement's committee, Mr David Wong: "Most people have accepted that it's important to speak good English. We want to help them improve their language skills this year.

"Just use short, simple sentences because the idea is to speak well and be understood."

The campaign was launched yesterday by Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, Dr Lee Boon Yang, at Woodlands Regional Library.

The National Library Board has come on board to organise

activities, such as reading and literacy programmes, at its network of libraries across the island.

Other organisations involved include the British Council and MediaCorp NewsRadio 93.8 FM, which will both support a bi-monthly e-newsletter teaching recipients how to speak and sound better.

The movement was launched in April 2000 by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, over concerns that broken English would hurt Singapore's aim of being a First World economy.

Singlish-speaking sitcom character Phua Chu Kang, played by artiste Gurmit Singh, came under fire at that time. More recently, the character was rapped for The SAR-vivor Rap for using broken English in a clip commissioned by the Ministry of Health and the Health Promotion Board in their fight against Sars.

Asked about this incident, Dr Lee said: "When dealing

with Sars, we wanted to grab everybody's attention, regardless of their background. Through rap, through Singlish, through dialect, we would try."

Asked for his stand on Singlish, Mr Wong said the committee did not have one.

"We're really about promoting good English and the kind we use here can incorporate words from the Hokkien dialect, the Malay language, the Tamil vocabulary, with no difficulty.

"My personal dream is that this will become a standard or benchmark for English as it is spoken in Asia."

Added Dr Lionel Wee, lecturer in the department of English language and literature at the National University of Singapore: "What you need to bear in mind is that you should try to speak good English.

"If you can do that and still retain fluency in Singlish, well, that's fine for you."