

SPEECH BY MR JASON LEOW, CHAIRMAN, SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT AT THE INSPIRING TEACHER OF ENGLISH AWARD CEREMONY, 4PM, TUESDAY, 29 SEPTEMBER 2026, AT THE NATIONAL LIBRARY, SINGAPORE

Our Guest of Honour, Dr Syed Harun Alhabsyi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Ministry of National Development,

Mr Lim Han Ming, Deputy Managing Editor, and Mr Jaime Ho, Editor, The Straits Times,

Our two Deputy Directors General of Education, MOE, Ms Beatrice Chong and Mrs Tan Chen Kee,

Our Principal Master Teachers and Master Teachers from the English Language Institute of Singapore,

Friends from the English Language and Literature Branch at CPDD2, MOE,

Winners, principals, nominees, ladies and gentlemen.

This is the 19th year of the Inspiring Teacher of English Award. In the past 18 years, we have recognised 151 teachers across both the Teaching Award and the Leadership Award.

Today, we add eight more names to that list.

To the winners: congratulations, and welcome to this community of inspiring educators.

To our nominees: thank you for being here. Your dedication to the teaching of English Language and Literature is what makes this award meaningful.

All our teachers of English, go beyond grammar and vocabulary. You create spaces where students feel confident to express themselves. To communicate. To connect. And to be heard.

That is also what the Speak Good English Movement is about. Our tagline, "Let's connect. Let's speak good English," says it simply, and sincerely. Good English builds bridges. Across cultures. Across communities. In Singapore, and beyond. The ability to speak good English opens doors, and creates opportunities.

The Movement has come a long way. We constantly find new ways to connect with Singaporeans. And this year, we tried something new.

We held our first comedy night, "Speak Good, Laugh Better". It played to a full house. Even our Gen Zs came, and as you would know, they are a tough crowd to reach. But they stayed, and we slayed.

But this, is what I took away from that night. That comedy, is not just about being funny. It is about wit. And wit, depends on language. The sharpest joke, needs the right word, at the right moment. That is good English at work – quick, precise, alive.

Speaking is a skill. And like any skill, it is built on a foundation. That foundation, is reading.

I was recently appointed as a ReadSG advocate by the National Library Board. I take this seriously. Because reading

builds vocabulary. It builds the rhythm and instinct for when a sentence works, and when it does not.

We are living in a world now driven by artificial intelligence. Machines can now generate fluent sentences for us. But, they cannot give us judgement, and they cannot give us an authentic voice. These innate human abilities, must remain ours. And if we want to speak well, we must, read well. This holds more truth today, than ever before.

As teachers, you understand this better than anyone. You are not just preparing students for exams. You are shaping how they think, how they speak, and how they connect with the world. That is a heavy responsibility, and you carry it well. Thank you for doing your best each day.

To our partners: thank you for supporting the Inspiring Teacher of English Award. To the National Library Board, for hosting us at The Pod. To The Straits Times, our long-time co-presenter. To the Ministry of Education, for your unwavering support.

To our colleagues at MOE CPDD and the English Language Institute of Singapore, thank you for identifying the exemplary educators we celebrate today.

My special thanks to our Principal Master Teachers and Master Teachers, Dr Tay May Yin, Dr Lucy Fernandez, Ms Rita Pillai, and this year is my last chance to thank Mr Cedric Leong for his contribution. Cedric, I wish you a truly wonderful retirement, filled with all the joy and relaxation you deserve, after years of inspiring so many teachers of English. May I invite everyone's applause, as we wish Cedric a happy new chapter ahead!

I must also thank our very diligent secretariat at the National Heritage Board. Thank you for your hard work, year after year, in keeping the Inspiring Teacher of English Award, and the Speak Good English Movement, relevant in today's dynamic landscape.

To every educator in this room: your influence reaches far beyond the classroom.

May your passion for teaching the English Language and Literature, continue to inspire those around you.

Thank you everyone, for supporting the Speak Good English Movement.

Enjoy the rest of the afternoon.