



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Rosyth School pupil is national champion speller

Singapore, 25 April, 2015 - By correctly spelling the word "zeitgeist", 11-year-old Justinian Guan has become Singapore's champion speller.

Earlier today, the Primary 6 pupil of Rosyth School, beat 21 others in a competition that came down to a two-way battle in the grand final of the fourth RHB-The Straits Times National Spelling Championship. The finalists representing 15 primary schools emerged from a record 1,654 participants this year, in the mind-sport event of the year organised in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE).

In the IlluminITE auditorium, Institute of Technical Education College Central, Justinian completed the word as the over 300-strong audience which comprised fellow student supporters, teachers, principals and parents and readers of The Straits Times held their breath before erupting into loud cheers of relief and jubilation.

That correct spelling displaced his opponent, Sng Hwee Woon, 11, from CHIJ St Nicholas Girls' School Primary, who was first runner-up, in a reverse twist. Both the pupils came from the North zone, where Hwee Woon -- the zone champion -- had bested Justinian, who was unplaced in that March 28 round.

In third place was Neil Goh Ken Tze, 11, from Anglo-Chinese School (Primary). The three ousted their competitors after a 2-hour showdown; after having made it through the preliminary on March 7 and the zonals on March 28.

Facing a judging panel from The Straits Times, MOE's English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS), and the Speak Good English Movement, each finalist took turns to spell aloud the words enunciated by master teacher with ELIS, Ms Shakila Vasu.

Every time a single letter was misspelled meant that the participant was out of the quest. As the rounds progressed with increasing difficulty, they were eliminated one by one, some tripping on words such as "herbaceous", "ebullient" and "posthumous".

A group of Singapore Chinese Girls' School pupils perked up the audience with their loud screams and cheering for their schoolmate, Nicole Lim, 11. They won a hamper for

being the Most Supportive School.

Justinian walked away with \$5,000 and the Challenge Trophy for his school, while the second and third place winners respectively received \$3,000 and \$1,000. The top winners in the four zonal rounds each received \$500 cash and \$100 worth of book vouchers at the prize presentation today. Each finalist also received a medal for his achievement.

The top pupils of today's competition will also be invited to compete in a cross-border spelling competition, slated for November this year. The RHB Spelling Masters, as the friendly competition is named, will pit top Singapore spellers against Malaysia's champions from its Spell-It-Right competition, which is an initiative of event sponsor RHB.

Guest-of-Honour Mr Lawrence Wong, Minister of Culture, Community and Youth and Second Minister of Communications and Information, commended the contestants, encouraging them to go beyond just the competition.

He said: "Do it for the love of the language. Work hard consistently at it every day. This is the kind of attitude and discipline that will put you in good stead in the future."

Chief judge of the championship and editor of The Straits Times' Schools programme, Ms Serene Goh, said: "This year's Big Spell had all the makings of a thriller -- it is not just a show of skill, but sportsmanship and human endeavour. In addition to the expert handling of the words themselves, we can celebrate our competitors' sporting character, their stamina and their sheer determination."

In his opening address, managing editor of The Straits Times, Mr Ignatius Low, noted how The Big Spell had always aimed to inspire young learners to achieve a higher level of English language skill, "to read more, and then, find a voice to express themselves". He said: "This competition has stoked in young learners a continual desire to improve. To deconstruct its success is to look at its spirit, which is not to elevate just one champion, but encourage all young learners to engage in perfecting a language skill."

From RHB Banking Group, Dato' Khairussaleh Ramli, its Deputy Group Managing Director, said RHB chose to champion this competition for many reasons beyond financial services -- it was about empowering and encouraging youth to excel.

"The growth of this championship has been overwhelming. What began with a mere 1,200 participants four years ago has now surpassed 1,600 pupils. Your presence here proves the younger generation has a desire to improve their grasp of the English language," he said.

MOE's Dr Elizabeth Pang, from the English language and literature branch of the Curriculum Planning and Development Division 2, said: "It was very encouraging to see so many pupils take part in the National Spelling Championship this year. The pupils' enthusiasm and sportsmanship were evident. Many participants were of a good standard and this made the competition even more exciting."

The programme director of literacy development added: "Through this event, we hope that our pupils have fun and also develop a love for the English language."

The contest is open to Primary 4, 5 and 6 pupils. It is co-organised by RHB Banking Group and The Straits Times, in partnership with the Ministry of Education. The Big Spell is supported by the National Library Board and Institute of Technical Education College Central. The venue sponsors were Sports Hub Library and Suntec Singapore.

About The Straits Times

The Straits Times is the English-language flagship daily of Singapore Press Holdings and the most-read newspaper in Singapore. It was launched on July 15, 1845, and provides comprehensive coverage of local, regional and international news. It has 20 bureaus in major cities worldwide, with its correspondents providing a Singapore perspective on what is happening around the world. Complementing the main title are weekly lifestyle supplements Digital Life, Urban and Mind Your Body, as well as IN and Little Red Dot for students.

The Straits Times is also on digital platforms with its website at www.straitstimes.com. It also has iOS and Android apps, and a menu of e-books housed in a separate Straits Times Star app.

The Straits Times has won multiple international awards, including from the Society of Publishers in Asia, the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers, the Pacific Area Newspaper Publishers' Association (Panpa) and Society of News Design. It was named Singapore Newspaper of the Year 2014 and 2013 by Marketing magazine and voted Singapore's favourite newspaper 2013 by Superbrands.

Its website www.straitstimes.com won gold in "Best In Online Media" at the 2012 Wan-Ifra Asian Digital Media Awards. Its Communities microsites platform was named 2014 Digital Innovation of the Year award by Panpa, and got Gold in the Best in Social Media category at the 2013 Wan-Ifra Asian Digital Media Awards.

About RHB Bank Singapore

RHB Bank was first established in 1961 as United Malayan Banking Corporation Berhad. Through a series of rapid expansion and strategic mergers, RHB Bank Singapore emerged as a full-licensed bank with a network of 7 branches and operating 13 Bureau de Change outlets in Singapore Changi Airport. The Bank provides a comprehensive range of financial products and services to consumer, corporate and business clients, ranging from various types of deposits and loans, treasury to investment banking.

RHB Bank Singapore is the first full bank to be conferred the prestigious S-Class (Service Class) award by SPRING Singapore as well as the first and only bank in Singapore and Malaysia to be awarded the prestigious "Best Customer Experience Management of the Year Award" in banking service by APCSC Hong Kong and most recently, awarded the SQC (Singapore Quality Class) by SPRING Singapore in June 2010.

For more information on RHB Bank Singapore, please log on to www.rhbbank.com.sg.

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Media

The English/Malay/Tamil Media group comprises the print and digital operations of The Straits Times, The Business Times, The New Paper, Berita Harian and My Paper (English section). It also consists of Tamil Murasu Ltd, which publishes Tamil Murasu and tabla!; book publishing arm Straits Times Press; SPH Data Services, which licenses the use of the Straits Times Index, in partnership with the Singapore Exchange and FTSE Ltd; financial data company ShareInvestor; and the two English stations of SPH Radio - Kiss92 and ONE FM 91.3.

The Chinese Media group publishes three Chinese newspapers - Lianhe Zaobao, Lianhe Wanbao and Shin Min Daily News; the digital editions of Lianhe Zaobao and Lianhe Wanbao, four student weeklies - zbCOMMA, Thumbs Up, Thumbs Up Junior and Thumbs Up Little Junior, ZbBz Newsgazine and My Paper (Chinese section). It also operates SPH Radio's Chinese radio station, UFM 100.3, and Focus Publishing, which produces a range of books and magazines including U-Weekly.

SPH Magazines, SPH's wholly-owned subsidiary, publishes and produces more than 100 magazine titles and has various online sites, like hardwarezone.com, herworldplus.com and luxuryinsider.com in Singapore and the region, covering a broad range of interests from lifestyle to information technology.

SPH has a 20 per cent stake in MediaCorp TV Holdings Pte Ltd, which operates free-to-air channels 5, 8 and U, and a 40 per cent stake in MediaCorp Press Limited, which publishes the free newspaper, Today.

Other Businesses

Online Classified and New Media
SPH's online classified and new media initiatives include ST701, the leading online marketplace for jobs (STJobs), property (STProperty), cars (STCars) and general classifieds (STClassifieds), sgCarmart and Streetsine; Asiaone, Stomp, omy.com and SPH Razor.

SPH's regional joint venture online classified business, 701Search, has a number of leading online classified sites in the region.

Events and Out-of-Home Advertising
Sphere Exhibits, Sphere Conferences, Exhibits Inc and Bizlink Exhibition Services organise innovative consumer and trade events and exhibitions as well as large scale conferences in Singapore and the region. SPH Buzz is a modern retail convenience chain with a network of stores around the island.

In addition, SPH also provides out-of-home (OOH) advertising through its digital out-of-home platform SPHMBO.

Education

SPH has a 22 per cent stake in preschool and enrichment provider MindChamps.

Properties

SPH REIT is a Singapore-based REIT established to invest in a portfolio of income-producing real estate primarily for retail purposes. SPH REIT comprises Paragon, a premier upscale retail mall and medical suite/office property in Orchard Road and The Clementi Mall, a mid-market suburban mall in the centre of Clementi town.

The Seletar Mall, located in Sengkang, is SPH's latest retail development. This property is a potential asset to be injected into SPH REIT. SPH's wholly-owned subsidiary, Times Development Pte Ltd, also developed a 43-storey upmarket residential condominium, Sky@eleven, at Thomson Road.

For more information, please visit www.sph.com.sg.