

Award-Winning Big Spell Returns for the Second Year

Singapore, 25 January 2013 - The award-winning RHB-The Straits Times National Spelling Championship is back for the second consecutive year.

The inaugural spelling competition organised by Singapore's Straits Times and the RHB Banking Group last year clinched a jury commendation in the World Young Reader Prize (Brand category) by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA) and also took the top prize for best newspaper event in the 2012 PANPA Awards.



From left: Mr Han Fook Kwang (Managing Editor, English & Malay newspapers division, Singapore Press Holdings), Mr Ivan Fernandez (Associate Editor of Straits Times, Singapore), Dr Tan Bee Geok (Deputy Director of the Gifted Education Branch, Ministry of Education, Singapore) and Mr Johari Muid (Managing Director of RHB Bank Berhad) launching the RHB-The Straits Times National Spelling Championship

This year's preliminary round will kick off on March 9, with more than 1,000 students from about 180 primary schools taking a paper test as a first step to qualify for the zonal rounds and the grand finals of the RHB-The Straits Times National Spelling Championship 2013.

Rich rewards are in store for those who make it to the top. The champion speller will take home \$5,000 cash and win for his or her school the Challenge Trophy. The first and second runnersup will win \$3,000 and \$1,000 in cash respectively.

The contest aims to develop a greater appreciation of the importance of spelling in literacy development among primary school pupils in Singapore and is organised in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Singapore (MOE).

The Big Spell, as the competition is popularly known, will also increase spelling buzz in cyberspace, where the public can test their spelling chops in a suite of spelling games, fuelled by education technology firm iQ-hub.

The competition is also supported by the National Library Board (NLB).

Mr Warren Fernandez, Editor of The Straits Times, said: "The RHB-The Straits Times partnership had a great first year in 2012, and we're happy to collaborate again with our main sponsor a second time. Working with the Ministry of Education to refine the way the game is played has been a great experience too, and we're hoping to raise the bar this year."

Mr Johari Muid, Managing Director of RHB Bank Berhad, a Malaysian bank which is the main sponsor of the Spelling Championship and a co-organiser of Malaysia's Spell-It-Right since 2008, said: "The RHB Banking Group believes in making a difference and that is why we have embarked on this journey to nurture, inspire and empower the younger generation. The RHB-ST National Spelling Championship is just one avenue for us to reach out to as many young minds



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as we possibly can in the hope that one day these young minds will be able to create positive changes within their community."

The Kuala Lumpur-based RHB has over 200 branches across Malaysia and the region, including seven branches in Singapore.

Dr Tan Bee Geok, Deputy Director of the Gifted Education Branch, Ministry of Education Singapore, said: "We believe that this competition will not only help to develop a wider vocabulary but also a greater awareness of the importance of accuracy in spelling and word use among primary pupils in Singapore."

ST Associate Editor Ivan Fernandez, RHB Bank's Managing Director, Mr Johari Abdul Muid and MOE's Deputy Director, Gifted Education, Dr Tan Bee Geok, were the Guests-of-Honour at the launch of the competition at Lido Theatre in Orchard Road, Singapore.

About 160 students got a taste of what it takes to get through The Big Spell at the launch. Two teams from Tampines North Primary School and Yu Neng Primary School faced off in one of iQhub's spelling games, to kick start the championship.

The students were also treated to a movie, *The Lorax*, which is based on a book of the same name by famous children's writer Dr Seuss.

The preliminary round of the RHB-The Straits Times National Spelling Championship 2013 will start on March 9. Contestants will sit for a 60-minute written test, where they will spell 50 words read out to them. About 80 of them who clear this first hurdle will take part in the zonal round. The zonal round will take place on April 13. The top spellers who emerge from the zonal championships will meet at the Grand Final, to be held on April 27.

To generate interest in the spelling competition and to prime students for the quest, *Little Red Dot*, The Straits Times' weekly school magazine for primary school pupils, will run a series of features on interesting words and spelling techniques ahead of the contest.

Ms Serene Goh, Editor of *Little Red Dot* and *IN*, a weekly publication for secondary school students, said: "We really want to get more young people spelling this year, and we're excited to have an e-learning game that will let us do that. In addition to watching the making of the second national championship, we'll also get to watch a digital leader board for Singapore's fastest e-speller."

The Straits Times' multimedia news portal *RazorTV* will also be showcasing video clips of the preliminaries, zonal rounds and grand final, while *HOT FM91.3* will run info capsules featuring the word of the day, spelling contests on air and visit shortlisted participating schools for *Recess Express*, its school outreach segment.

All Primary 4 to 6 pupils of a full school under the Ministry of Education in Singapore or the equivalent can apply to take part in the spelling contest. They must be nominated by their schools, which will register directly with the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

The competition's official website, www.straitstimes.com/bigspell, will feature footage and updates of the competition. It will also house iQ-hub's suite of online games, which are also available via a mobile app. Game participants also stand to win prizes if they chalk up the highest scores on the leaderboard.

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 15 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



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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.

About The Straits Times

The Straits Times, the English flagship daily of SPH, has been serving readers for more than a century. Launched on July 15, 1845, its comprehensive coverage of world news, East Asian news, Southeast Asian news, home news, sports news, financial news and lifestyle updates makes The Straits Times the most-read newspaper in Singapore.

Quality news, in-depth analyses, impactful commentaries and breaking stories are packaged to give readers riveting accounts of events in Singapore, the region, and beyond.

The Straits Times' key strength is in its world class coverage of news outside Singapore. With 20 bureaus in major cities around the world, The Straits Times correspondents bring world news to readers on a Singapore platter, helping them appreciate world events from a Singaporean perspective.

In keeping with the times, The Straits Times introduced weekly supplements such as Digital Life (DL), Urban and Mind Your Body (MYB) to complement The Straits Times as well as IN and Little Red Dot to cater to young readers in schools. This year (2010), IN won the World Young Reader prize for the Newspapers In Education category. The prize was awarded by the World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (Wan-Ifra).

The Straits Times also has an online presence at www.straitstimes.com. The site features top stories, blogs and an online forum threads. Also under The Straits Times' umbrella are citizen journalism site Stomp and online television service The Straits Times RazorTV.

About Singapore Press Holdings Ltd

Incorporated in 1984, main board-listed Singapore Press Holdings Ltd (SPH) is Southeast Asia's leading media organisation, engaging minds and enriching lives across multiple languages and platforms.

Newspapers, Magazines and Book Publishing

In Singapore, SPH publishes 18 newspaper titles in four languages. On an average day, 3.05 million individuals or 76 per cent of people above 15 years old, read one of SPH's news publications. SPH also publishes and produces more than 100 magazine titles in Singapore and the region, covering a broad range of interests from lifestyle to information technology. SPH's subsidiaries, Straits Times Press and Focus Publishing, produce quality books and periodicals in English and Chinese.

Internet and Mobile

Beyond print, the Internet editions of SPH newspapers enjoy over 330 million page views with 18 million unique visitors every month. Apart from SPH AsiaOne portal, SPH's online and new media initiatives include an online marketplace for products, services and employment, ST701; Stomp, omy.sg, and The Straits Times RazorTV. SPH also launched The Straits Times' iPad and enhanced iPhone applications, an Android smartphone application and The Business Times' iPad and smartphone applications. SPH's Chinese flagship newspaper Lianhe Zaobao has also launched its digital platforms which include a web application, as well as online and PDF versions.

Broadcasting

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. In the radio business, SPH has an 80 per cent stake in SPH UnionWorks Pte Ltd, which operates entertainment stations UFM 100.3 in Mandarin, as well as Kiss 92 and HOT FM91.3 in English.

Events and Out-of-Home Advertising

SPH's events subsidiary Sphere Exhibits organises innovative consumer and trade events and exhibitions. In addition, SPH has ventured into out-of-home (OOH) advertising through its wholly-owned subsidiary, SPH MediaBoxOffice Pte Ltd, Singapore's leading Digital Out-of-Home advertising company.



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Properties

SPH owns and manages Paragon, the prime retail and office complex in the heart of Orchard Road, Singapore's main shopping belt. Its second retail development, The Clementi Mall, started business operations in 2011. SPH's wholly-owned subsidiary, Times Development Pte Ltd, has also developed a 43-storey upmarket residential condominium, Sky@eleven, at Thomson Road. SPH's latest retail development project, The Seletar Mall, is slated for completion by end 2014. For more information, please visit www.sph.com.sg

About the Ministry of Education

The Singapore Ministry of Education (MOE) formulates and implements education policies and programmes in consultation with its stakeholders. These policies and programmes aim to help all students discover their talents, realise their potential, and develop a passion for learning that lasts through life. MOE also oversees the development and management of the Government and Government-aided primary schools, secondary schools and junior colleges. Please visit www.moe.gov.sg for more information.