

## **DPM WONG LAUNCHES OVERSEAS SINGAPOREAN PORTAL TO CONNECT WITH CITIZENS ABROAD**

**Tan Bee Leng, CNA, 26 Aug 2006**

Shanghai: Singapore is tapping the Internet to stay connected with its 140,000 citizens overseas.

The government has launched the Overseas Singaporean Portal to help nurture a diaspora of Singaporeans abroad, who are firmly rooted back home.

The government wants the portal to eventually be driven by overseas Singaporeans.

It was a time for the Singaporean diaspora to celebrate.

Living, working and studying around the world - they now have a new-found connection.

The portal is meant to help Singaporeans abroad keep up with the latest news from home and to enable Singaporean communities overseas to connect with one another, as well as with friends and families back home.

The portal also boasts e-government services as well as web chats, blogs and online forums.

Mr Ng Hsian Pin, Overseas Singaporean in Shanghai, said: "Certainly at times, there will be jokes and even garbage language. But there will be gems and ideas generated on this website. We should look at it positively, many Singaporeans are proud of their country and their roots."

There are 140,000 Singaporeans overseas, among them some of the island's brightest talents.

And the government is keen to keep them connected to home.

Mr Wong Kan Seng, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, said: "This Singaporean diaspora is rich in diversity, experiences, knowledge and networks. You add to the rich fabric of our nation. It is important for us to remain engaged with one another. In our diversity, we must find a way to stay united."

At least 900 Singaporeans from around China attended the launch of the portal in Shanghai, but Mr Wong was eyeing a far wider audience.

Mr Wong also had a "live" web chat with Singaporeans in seven global cities.

Among them was 55-year-old Daniel Kwok, who has been away from Singapore for 37 years.

Mr Kwok, Overseas Singaporean in Sydney, said: "The launch of the portal is a great signal from the government in its policy of reaching out to overseas Singaporeans."

Mr Wong said: "We will do well to harness this to our advantage. It enables us to be united as one by the Singapore spirit, even though we may be physically apart."

Making sure Singaporeans abroad still have a taste of home, the Overseas Singaporean Unit has also partnered top private companies and the public service to offer updates on job and internship opportunities in Singapore and the region.

The unit has also launched a Distinguished Business Leaders' Series, inviting top corporate leaders to share with overseas Singaporeans the "secret recipes" of their success.

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