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EXPLORE

The Corporate Newsletter of the MMI Group

MMI Modern[®]
Montessori
International
(LONDON)
A LEADER in Montessori Pre-school Education
Modern Montessori International Group



Deputy Prime Minister

Minister for Finance & Minister for Manpower

Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam

Officiates MMI Building's Grand Opening!

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AN EVENING TO REMEMBER MMI GRAND OPENING CEREMONY 2011



The beginning of a new calendar year is as good a time as any to appraise the year 2011, to celebrate our achievements and to evolve further towards distinguished accomplishments. Looking back 2011 was a year of absolute excitement that was impressive and awe-inspiring for the Modern Montessori International Group (MMI). It was a year that saw us moving progressively towards a brighter future.



Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam receiving a bouquet from a smiling Mdm Sheila

The highlight of the year was certainly the Grand Opening Ceremony of the MMI Building 2. When we first all moved in there in June 2011, it was bittersweet memories as there were precious memories formed at the Orchard office. Since then new memories, fresh laughter and joy resounds in the new building. The Opening was a day of pride and joy for our Chairman/Ceo Dr.T.Chandru, as it was a commemoration of his creative vision and goals.



It was the dawn of an affirmation, the biggest elation for the Modern Montessori Group was the Grand Opening Ceremony on the 18th of November 2011. This was a momentous and poignant day for everyone at MMI and especially so for Dr. Chandroo. For it was a day one of his many aspirations materialized with the strength of his trusted team. It was a day that reflected the rapid growth and success of a company that began in a single storey shop-house back in 1989. Now it stands tall and proud as MMI'S Corporate HQ and MMI Building 2.

The atmosphere was simply awe-inspiring with over 500 well wishers from across various industries that were there to grace MMI'S Grand Opening Ceremony, officiated by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Finance & Minister for Manpower, Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam. Dr.Chandroo addressed the guests with his arresting speech about the journey that was filled with trials and tribulations before it could see the success accomplished today.

Dr.Chandroo emphasized the importance of education for every child- he was very passionate about the cause that no child should be deprived of an education due to financial conundrums; he also added that pre-school education as foundation for a child's future is crucial. The MMI Group has in line expansion plans of 200 centres worldwide within the next 5 years.

Mr. Tharman gave a thought provoking and heartfelt speech about the growth and importance of education in Singapore, in particular pre-school education. He also applauded MMI's efforts in ensuring that every child receives the education they rightfully deserve regardless of their background.

This illustrated the corporate vision that MMI has held onto for since its establishment- the passion and drive for quality education.

It is indeed that very zest for quality that has enabled the profound success of MMI. When you looked around the event, it was a beautiful dream in bloom, of spectacular emotions, excited chatter and laughter of everyone present. To capture this monumental day in all its glory, there was extensive media coverage across the main newspapers and news channels, creating an insight to what is truly MMI - a true gem in its own right.



Deputy Prime Minister, Mr. Tharman Shanmugaratnam with Dr Chandroo, Mdm Sheila and Mr. Sanjey Chandran.



Forerunner In Early Childhood Education Opens New Building



Dr. T. Chandross, MMI's Chairman and CEO

FROM its modest beginnings running a one-room teacher training centre out of a shop house in Victoria Street in 1989, the Modern Montessori International Group (MMI) has grown into a major player in the early childhood education industry in Singapore and the Asia Pacific.

It now has close to 100 teacher training and preschool centres spread over 14 countries. Today, MMI celebrates yet another milestone with the official opening of its MMI Building II in a prime location on South Bridge Road by Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Finance and Manpower, Thirumavan Shanmugaratnam.

The building has five levels of classrooms to conduct teacher training courses. It is adjacent to MMI Building I which houses the group's corporate headquarters. Besides owning these two freehold properties, MMI also has 30 centres offering teacher training and preschool education in Singapore. More than 3,000 children are enrolled in its centres all over the island.

MMI, founded by Dr. T. Chandross, is the exclusive master franchisee for MMI (London)'s trademarked brand for the Montessori preschool education method.

With the opening of the new MMI Building II, the MMI Group has plans to strengthen its foundations in Singapore and accelerate its growth overseas.

Dr. Chandross, MMI's Chairman and CEO, shares MMI's journey from its beginnings to where it is today and his vision for the future. He also discusses the challenges MMI faces and the need to give back to the community.

Q: How did you end up venturing into the preschool business?

A: In the mid-80s, I was running a business publishing and distributing educational books for children. In the process, I found out from parents about the lack of good preschools and kindergartens. It dawned on me to tap the strong demand for high quality early childhood education. It also gives me the satisfaction of nurturing young minds.

Q: Why did you decide on the Montessori system?

A: I wanted to have a unique selling proposition for the business. From my research, I felt that there was so much the Montessori education method can give to a child. Montessori has 100 years of history and is well known all over the world, so I decided to bring the methodology to Singapore.

It took two years of negotiations with MMI (London). I convinced them to grant me exclusive master franchise rights for the entire Asia Pacific region, and I opened a teachers' training institute first. Then we started a small enrichment centre. In 1993, we opened our first MMI childcare centre at Bukit Arang in Upper Serangoon.

Since then, the Group has grown into a network of nearly 100 teacher training and preschool centres in various parts of the world.

Q: How did your business evolve over the years?

A: When we first started we had two strategic business units, one being our teacher training and

the other our preschool. Our first preschool was an immediate success. Within six months of its opening it was almost full. That gave us the confidence to plough in more money to open more centres.

Around 1998, we moved into franchising as we thought that was the best mode of expanding the business. Today we have 30 schools in Singapore, with 15 run by franchisees while the rest are corporate-owned.

Our franchise arrangements, which were initially for the Singapore market, expanded to other countries in the region such as Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Q: What support do you give your franchisees in Singapore?

A: Today we have 15 franchisees in Singapore and we do not intend to bring in new ones. MMI management would like to give our current franchisees the opportunity to open more centres. I want to support our franchisees who have been with us for the last ten years or more. Only if they can't afford to invest into bigger set-ups then MMI will open its own preschools.

Q: What are the major challenges facing MMI?

A: Our business is very people-oriented. It's about nurturing kids. But you must find good teachers who are passionate and dedicated. That is the biggest challenge, and one that is experienced all over the world.

To surmount this challenge, we have expanded



MMI Building II in a prime location on South Bridge Road

our teacher training courses – to provide diploma and even an honours degree course in early childhood education with UK's Middlesex University.

Q: What are your plans to expand the MMI network?

A: Over the next ten years we plan to open another 20 schools in Singapore. We are also in negotiations with a university in UK and by the middle of next year we should be delivering business courses. And that's part of the purpose of having MMI Building II.

We are now in 14 countries. In the next five to ten years we would like to represent another 14 or 15 countries, especially in the Middle East, where we do not yet have a presence. That's our dream. There is huge potential in places like Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Oman.

And Asia itself is so huge. Even if we leave out India and China, the other markets like Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand and Indonesia are enough to occupy us for the next ten years.

In Vietnam, MMI has both an investment license and an education license to run international preschools. MMI has agreed to take a 15-year lease on a newly-constructed school in the Vietnam Singapore Industrial Park in Ho Chi Minh.

Under phase two of our Vietnam expansion, we are buying a 50,000 sq ft piece of land in Hai Phong, near Hanoi, to set up a new campus to cater to the expected surge in demand for quality preschool education in the country.

Q: In what ways does the group fulfil its corporate social responsibility (CSR)? What motivates you to help the less privileged?

A: MMI has always been a responsible corporation in terms of doing its part for the poor and for the underprivileged. We put aside a minimum of \$200,000 annually for various organisations.

In 2008, we set up a childcare centre dedicated solely for this CSR purpose. It's in a Hindu temple in Sengkang. It currently houses more than 30 children and it's licensed for more than 40. Children from lower-income families pay highly subsidised rates to get a full-fledged Montessori education.

I came from humble beginnings and I have always believed that it's very important to return to the community. No child should be denied an early childhood education.

I also believe that the more you give the more you get, and it is not necessarily in the form of money. It is happiness. My three children are doing well in their own way. That for me is happiness.

Doing It The Modern Montessori Way



Chandross.

"Montessori regards a child's mind like a sponge. It can absorb a tremendous amount of information," he adds.

The Montessori methodology believes that each child is unique. Teaching occurs in an environment that enables a child to develop at his/her own pace. Lessons take place on an individual basis or in small groups to enable the teacher to discover more about the child and his/her inner development.

One of the key elements in a Montessori education is the mixed age classroom which fosters a give and take relationship among the children. Children develop qualities crucial to their social and mental development when working together at different levels of ability. The older children gain a sense of maturity and confidence as the younger children look up to them as role models and leaders. The younger children may imitate or observe their older peers.

Corporate Milestones

1989
• Begins operations by launching Modern Montessori Training Centre as a one-room training centre at Victoria Street

1993
• Opens Montessori childcare centre at Bukit Arang, Upper Serangoon

1998
• Starts offering Montessori business opportunities through franchising

2000
• Makes first foray overseas by starting a training centre in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

2003
• Starts MMI India as a joint venture with the Jaipuria Group

2004
• Starts joint venture MMI Thailand with the Horizon Group
• Starts joint venture with Ceylonco Group in Sri Lanka

2006

- Montessori's core course, 'Diploma in Montessori Method of Education', obtains accreditation from British Accreditation Council, a rare and prestigious recognition
- Opens corporate office in Hong Kong, a first step in expanding into the vast China market
- Appoints franchisee in Jakarta, Indonesia

2007

- Corporate headquarters moves to MMI Building I on South Bridge Road, a 6-storey freehold building which the group acquired earlier in the year

2010

- Dr. Chandross wins Outstanding Entrepreneur Award given as part of the Asia Pacific Entrepreneur Awards

2011

- Signs MOU for a long term lease to operate the first MMI school in Vietnam
- Signs JV to set up MMI centres and teacher training in Myanmar
- Wins Superbrands "Most Preferred Brand" Award
- Officially opens 6-storey freehold MMI Building II on New 11, its second freehold building in the heart of Singapore's CBD area

MMI LONDON

A bundle of joy!

Our heartfelt wishes from the Management & Staff of MMI Singapore to Marianne Bourke who gave birth to a beautiful baby girl on the 8th of November 2011 - a wonderful way to usher in the New Year!

Tease the season to be jolly!

The Christmas spirit and joy was spread across the four pre-school centres, each had incredible Christmas plays and entertaining Christmas parties!

Extract from an email received from an attendee at the Golders Green party: "The MMI Christmas party I must admit was one of the best ever!!! There was such a crowd & the kids performed brilliantly!!!! The parents enjoyed it too!!! So much fun was had by all!!!"

MMI's very own Santas & Santarinas!



A picture of our Croydon children rehearsing earnestly for the nativity play which was entitled 'Come to a party', all children who were involved in the play ranged from ages 3 months to 5 years.

MMI NIGERIA

Also adding onto our development is MMI Nigeria, which is doing well with its second center in the capital city of Abuja and one in Lagos and recently they have set up a fourth centre in Port Harcourt Centre and are moving progressively.

WE ARE GROWING!

MMI MYANMAR

Our most recent feather in the cap is our joint-venture agreement with Myanmar. The collaboration is to develop an international-class preschool for Myanmar children and as for long-term goals we intend to set up business programs and introduce tertiary education for working adults. The Myanmar market which has just opened up is a budding haven for potential pre-school operators, with many potential buyers looking into the market. Our pro-active research and initiative has provided us inroads into this upcoming and booming market!



Dr Chandroo, CEO/Chairman of MMI at the signing of the joint-venture agreement with Myanmar Partners.



MMI GURGAON

This July saw MMI Gurgaon relocate to its new centre in DLF Phase I. The new building was a fresh start for the school and saw the implementation of new concepts along with a host of fun activities and events. In August, MMI celebrated India's 64th year of Independence with a flag hoisting ceremony in the school. The teachers and children came dressed in colors of the national flag and sang patriotic songs and the National Anthem when the flag was unfurled.



The children also enjoyed their visit to a farmhouse in Gurgaon where they got to see a variety of birds and farm animals. They got a chance to see hens, chicks, roosters, guinea fowl, geese, and ducks and feed the rabbits. MMI also hosted a Winter Carnival in November. The school was decked to the hilt and stalls for games for all ages, arts and crafts, and yummy food ensured that a wonderful time was had by parents and children alike. The children also put up a short performance showcasing the use of Montessori materials from different modules.



*A new building for a new beginning-
MMI Gurgaon's New Centre*



MMI SRI LANKA



Modern Montessori International Pre-School celebrated its Sports Day 2011 on the 29th of August at the CR & FC amongst a large gathering of parents and Ms Denise Chahal-MMI Program Coordinator for the region. The theme event was a hew of bright colours and activities.



Ready, Get Set, Go! Jovial faces of MMI Sri Lanka's children at their Sports Day

Summer Camp Fun at MMI Sri Lanka



MMI SINGAPORE

MID AUTUMN FESTIVAL MMI SENGKANG

Now which one of us won't be excited and glee over lanterns of different shapes and colors. Some of us may even have been reminiscing the good old days when we carried one those! MMI Sengkang headed out to the Singapore Chinese Garden to usher in the Mid - Autumn celebrations, now isn't that exciting!



Children, lanterns and a fantabulous time!

MMI WAS THE OFFICIAL PARTNER AT THE SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH CAMPAIGN!

Speaking good English is something we take for granted in Singapore, it is the main business language and the medium of instruction in schools. Truly though, how many of us as adults are understood and communicate clearly using the language? Wouldn't this translate into obstacles for the next generation? So the theme for the 2011/12 Speak Good English Campaign was "How you speak makes a difference"! It was a movement to draw a concerted effort amongst Singaporeans about proper communication particularly with children in good spoken English. This was in hope to immerse Singaporeans in an environment that advocated the proper use of both the written and spoken language.

The campaign set out to actively involve parents to explore creative ways to connect with their children linguistically. Held at the Jurong East Regional Library, the Guest of Honor at the event was Mr. Lawrence Wong, Minister of State, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Education, the event also saw parents and children from all walks of life.



Modern Montessori International (MMI) was one of the official partners for the event. Being a leading provider of pre-school education, we thought it was important for us to jump on the bandwagon and be an integral part of this campaign.

So we set out in full force! Everyone from the teachers, staff, parents and even the children came to support us! It was heartening to see such camaraderie.

Being uniquely MMI, we created our own rap-along-sessions and presented our own speech and drama presentations and a skit about the importance of speaking good English and being understood. All our activities at the event were an instantaneous hit! It got the little ones, parents, staff and teachers enticed and enthralled by the sheer musicality and creativity of the activities.

Of course we all learnt a thing or two from the Campaign- Speaking Good English is important if you want to be understood!



Mr Michael Phillips, Deputy Head of Early Childhood Education (MMI) seen here with Minister of State, Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Education, Mr. Lawrence Wong.

OUR VERY OWN TRAIN!



An exciting insight into our very own train!

On another exciting note we saw the smiling faces of MMI children in the North East Line train. The full train advertisement ran for the month of October through December. The primary objective of the campaign was to reinforce our brand as being the best first experience a child could have. The entire train was representative of what truly signifies MMI- our passion towards the successful growth of every child that walks through our doors as one of the leading pre-schools in Singapore.

DINNER & DANCE 2011

"When I grow up!" was the exhilarating theme for this Annual Dinner & Dance, tucked away in the tranquility and serenity of the greenery of Singapore. The event was held the prestigious Seletar Country Club. Staff and franchisees were all decked out in their best theme outfits - of what they want to be when they grow up! So we saw the likes of the chefs, super-models, sports-women, navy and even a clown! Everyone had a fantabulous time!

