

**SPEECH BY MR LAWRENCE WONG, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT AND SECOND MINISTER FOR FINANCE
AT THE LAUNCH OF “A RIVER RUNS THROUGH IT” EXHIBITION ON 29
MARCH 2017, 10.30AM, AT THE URA CENTRE ATRIUM**

Mr Peter Ho,
Chairman, Urban Redevelopment Authority

Mr Ng Lang,
CEO, Urban Redevelopment Authority

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

1. I am very happy to join you today for the launch of the Kallang River exhibition.
2. Rivers, as we all know, are the lifeblood of cities. Many cities around the world began their histories because of proximity to rivers. In the past, these were a main mode of transport for goods and commerce along which cities were built. Subsequently, over the decades of rapid industrialisation, urban rivers were often abused and under-valued. They were covered over, used as pollution sinks, and allowed to deteriorate. It happened in Singapore too, so we are not without blame. But this has been the case in many other countries
3. Fortunately, there has been a dramatic change of thinking about how rivers can play a role in our urban landscape. This happened in Singapore in the 1980s, but I think it happened progressively in many other places around the world over the last decade. It stems from a fundamental human need for an emotional

connection with nature. It also arises from a need to soften the harshness of the modern metropolis.

4. Cities everywhere now see water as a cultural and recreational asset. They are seeking to restore their connections to rivers and streams.
5. Many have used rivers as catalysts to rejuvenate precincts – to create new recreational spaces, community nodes and beautiful promenades. Within Asia, one good example is Seoul's Cheonggyecheon Stream. For more than 30 years, this was an area where there was an elevated freeway that covered the stream, and it was choked full of traffic. This freeway was removed in 2003, and it has now become a 6km-long thriving green and blue public space that attracts over 60,000 visitors every day.
6. In Singapore, we have long embraced green and blue spaces as an integral part of our urban development. We started out to be a Garden City. Now we're making Singapore a City of Garden and Waters. We launched the Active, Beautiful, Clean Waters (ABC Waters) Programme to develop and harness the full potential of existing waterways and waterbodies. One major water body we have is the Singapore river. A hundred years ago, it was the heart of Singapore's entrepot economy but became overworked and neglected. In the 1980s, we cleaned up the river's waters by resettling slums, farms, and polluting industry. Progressively, over the years, we have enhanced the precinct. Today, the Singapore River provides a beautiful setting for a vibrant commercial and lifestyle corridor in the heart of our Central Business District.

7. The Kallang River is another prominent river in Singapore's history that is being transformed. At 10 km, it is the longest natural river in Singapore, and almost three times the length of the Singapore River. Like the Singapore River, it too was cleaned up in the mid-1980s. The last shipyards and industries at Tanjong Rhu were cleared in the early 1990s, and they have now become waterfront housing. Today, the area is a populous one with 800,000 people living within close proximity of the river. There are housing, industrial estates and parks, which contribute to the diverse landscape lining the river as it flows from the Lower Peirce Reservoir and merges into the Kallang Basin.
8. The transformation of the Kallang River is still continuing. Some of the older estates along the river, like the industrial estates in Kallang Bahru and Geylang Bahru, will need to be renewed over the next few decades. This gives us new opportunities to inject life into the river banks. We have some plans to do so, and this exhibition is meant to showcase our plans.

Kallang River – Full of Opportunities

9. **First**, we will add up to 100,000 new residential units within 2km of both sides of the Kallang River in the next 20 years. Kampong Bugis is one of the key residential precincts. It is about 17 hectares in size, and we envision this new residential precinct to be one that is people-centric and car-lite. As we announced recently, we will be developing this precinct in a different manner. Instead of carving out the entire precinct and putting out individual sites for sale, we will call a tender to appoint a Master Developer to oversee the overall planning and

development of the precinct. The Master Developer will be given the flexibility to develop the site in phases in line with market demand, so don't expect everything to be up at the start. But at the same time, we will impose certain responsibilities and requirements on the Master Developer. They will be required to put in place certain features within the precinct, including a comprehensive network of pedestrian walkways and cycling paths to provide connectivity to the rest of the island, to have district-level systems to manage waste and storm water, and also to incorporate open community spaces and a lively waterfront in the overall design of the precinct. This is one new addition to the Kallang River, to add to the residential areas and to develop this new residential precinct called Kampong Bugis.

10. **Second**, we will introduce vibrant commercial and recreational nodes along the river to provide more avenues for both work and play. Upstream of the river, there are older industrial estates which can be transformed into new mixed-use areas. This will provide more opportunities for businesses seeking to leverage on the area's proximity to the city centre and its good connectivity. Further downstream of the river, near where the Sports Hub is currently located, SportSG is looking at injecting new community sports facilities along the waterfront. Within the Kallang Basin itself, we will also have more access to water sports for all Singaporeans to enjoy.

11. **Thirdly**, to string all these new developments together, we will insert more jogging and cycling paths for seamless connectivity along the entire corridor. Today, many people enjoy walking, jogging and cycling from Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park to Gardens by the Bay. Along the way, you will pass by various HDB and

private estates. We can also see beautiful water features and lush greenery decorating the river banks – due to the result of PUB’s efforts under the ABC Waters Programme. The park connectors that run along the river, however, are more than twenty years old. They are not entirely seamless – there are several roads intersect the park connectors at various points. Pedestrians and cyclists need to make detours to use traffic junctions or overhead bridges to cross these roads. The most daunting intersection, as cyclists among us will know, occurs at the PIE, where pedestrians and cyclists need to climb 83 steps to cross an overhead bridge that straddles the 16-lane expressway. I cycled here together with the URA team, where we cycled together, and crossed the bridge while carrying our bicycles. This showed us how it is worthwhile to have a better and more seamless connection across the PIE. We have engaged consultants to study possible solutions for a more seamless inter-town cycling route along the river promenade, and we have come up with some very good ideas for underpasses, as well as elevated cable bridges. We can see them at the displays today.

Shaping the Kallang River’s Future Together

12. This exhibition is designed to share some of the broad concepts that we have developed. They highlight the various possibilities for urban development, but they are not final. We want to hear from Singaporeans, get your feedback and inputs, and co-create a future Singapore that meets our shared aspirations.

13. In the coming months, we will be engaging the community as well as architects, planners, developers and landowners to further refine the plans.

14. While we plan for the future, we also want to learn from our past and celebrate our heritage. Our urban planners are also involved in this work to preserve the character and identity of the precinct. They have been working with different groups to do this. One group is the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Council, where URA has been partnering with them to engage young photographers to document the city through their eyes. They have already done the project to capture the charm of Serangoon Road, which is one of our key historic districts. Hopefully, we will be able to work with them to document the heritage of Kallang River to uncover some of the hidden gems and preserve what makes Kallang River unique.

15. This is just the first in a series of exhibitions that URA is organising. Over the course of the year and even beyond, we will have more exhibitions to come. That is because we have major plans to redevelop and build a new Singapore together. We have new areas like Jurong Lake District, which will be the site of our new High Speed Rail Terminus linking Singapore and Kuala Lumpur; Punggol, with the new Creative Cluster emerging which is the site of the new SIT campus; Woodlands, where we will have a rail transit link between Johor and Woodlands; as well as the development of the Rail Corridor coming up. These are just some of the few big projects we have in the coming years. We will share more about these plans when we are ready, and we encourage everyone to share your feedback and ideas.

16. We hope the coming series of exhibitions will inspire more conversations on how we can work together to make Singapore a greater city and a better home for all of us. On that note, thank you very much and please enjoy the exhibition.

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