

14-3/94/11/11

**SPEECH BY MR MATTHIAS YAO CHIH,
SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY,
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE SPICE GARDEN
AT FORT CANNING PARK
AT 10.00 AM ON 11 NOVEMBER 1994**

Ladies and gentlemen, a very good morning to all of you. I am delighted to join you today for the launch of the Spice Garden.

2 Fort Canning, where we are now standing, is of great historical significance. We know that in the 14th Century this was a seat of Malay royalty. In the 19th Century, Sir Stamford Raffles built his residence here; and later, the British Armed Forces established their Far East Command Centre upon this hill. Now, Fort Canning is not only a well-known historical site, but a popular park with both young and old.

3 Fort Caning is a national heritage which we are conserving. Our planners have capitalised on the historical assets of the area in planning the development of the Civic District which will encompass important civic buildings, such as the City Hall and Parliament House.

4 Fort Caning Park is one of the key features of the Heritage Link now being developed by URA and PWD in the Civic District. The Heritage Link will connect cultural and institutional buildings of architectural and historical interest within the area. When completed, the Link will transform this area into a major landmark and a cultural hub.

5 At Fort Canning, the National Parks Board has begun a comprehensive programme to revitalise and transform the Park into a national history park. Under the masterplan, Fort Canning's historical structures and sites will be restored and reconstructed. The Parks's historical charm will be enhanced through a careful blend of the relics with its natural horticultural beauty.

6 Already several major projects have been completed. These include the restoration of Keramat Iskander Shah and the renovation of Fort Canning Centre. Also completed is the 19th Century Walk-of-History trail which links several historical relics, such as the well-known Fort Gate.

7 More projects are in the pipeline. A permanent sight-and-sound World War II exhibition will be introduced at the former Underground Far East Command Centre, also known as the 'Bunkers' or 'Battle Box'. A recreational and commercial centre will take shape at the former Singapore Command and Staff College Building. Though NParks has leased the building to a private operator, it keeps close consultation with the developer to ensure that the proposed activities are in keeping with the Park's ambience.

8 A second historical trail, the 14th Century Walk-of-History, is also being planned. This trail will link the 14th Century relics such as the restored Keramat and the Archaeological Excavation Site.

9 Other exciting attractions being planned are Singapura Steps and Temasek Terrace. They will be located on the western slope of the Park facing Clarke Quay and the Singapore River. The steps and terrace will have landscaped pavilions, woodlands and a bathing pool, which will resemble the 14th Century setting when the area was used by the ancient Malay royalty.

10 The Spice Garden, which we are launching today is also a part of the plan to recapture the Park's history.

The Fort Canning Park was the first site of our Botanic Gardens, before it was moved to its present site in 1857.

The Spice Garden is only a small replica of the original 19-ha tract that Sir Stamford Raffles established here in 1822.

NParks has quite successfully replicated the Garden using some of the plants, such as cloves and nutmegs, which were cultivated here.

11 The launch of the Spice Garden marks the mid-point of the Park's redevelopment plans. The various projects completed so far have breathed new life to the area.

An under-utilised area four years ago, the Park is now a popular venue for cultural and recreational activities. Exhibitions, performances and weddings are held on its grounds. Two resident performing arts companies, Theatreworks and Singapore Dance Theatre, have also contributed to making this Park a well visited cultural centre.

12 I congratulate the National Parks Board for drawing up a redevelopment programme that is sensitive to the area's historical, cultural and environmental heritage.

13 I am sure all Singaporeans will look forward to the unique experience that the revitalised Fort Canning will offer its visitors.

14 It is now my pleasure to open the Spice Garden.

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