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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR MATTHIAS YAO CHIH, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE AND ADVISOR TO MACPHERSON GROs, AT THE COMPLETION CEREMONY FOR UPGRADING AT MACPHERSON PRECINCT ON FRIDAY, 28 NOV 97 AT 8.00 PM

This ceremony marks the completion of the upgrading of 15 blocks of flats in MacPherson. I am sure all of us have looked forward eagerly to this moment. Through the government's upgrading programme, this precinct has been transformed. The old precinct, built to old standards, is now comparable to a new one. Where there was land with no plants, there are now flowers and shrubs. Where there were footpaths with no shelters, there are now covered linkways. Where there were no seats downstairs, there are now pavilions and gathering points.

When I approved the plan 4 years ago, I could not imagine the result fully. I could only agree to what I saw in the drawings, and rely on the good judgement of the architects that this was the best plan for MacPherson.

During the construction, I made some changes, and gave my suggestions to the working committee. Month by month, we saw the transformation take place.

Now, the project is completed. It is a success. We now have a modern and beautiful precinct. The difference is felt not only by the residents. Many people who live elsewhere but pass through MacPherson on a bus or come here to visit a friend or relative have told me that the precinct now looks so different.

Some say it even smells different.

I am impressed by the new look of the precinct. What I am most impressed by is how the precinct reveals its character at night. When we come home at night, our precinct now looks friendly and cosy. We get the feeling, after a hard day's work, that this is where we can enjoy some comfort and warmth. We get the feeling that MacPherson welcomes you when you return home at night, every night.

This transformation is the result of the care, attention and effort put in by some hard-working people to bring you the new MacPherson. I would like to invite all the residents to express to them our gratitude and appreciation:

Grassroots leaders (feedback, leadership)

Architects, engineers and officers of HDB (effort)

Officers and staff of the MacPherson CC and Marine ParadeTown Council (effort)

Management and staff of Kienta Engineering Construction (helpful)

The residents (tolerance, understanding, support)

From tonight, our estate will have new name. The name was chosen to signify that we now have a clean and green estate that is symbolic of Singapore the garden city. And also to signify that we will make an effort to protect and preserve this new environment. From tonight, our estate will be known as MacPherson Garden.

The physical upgrading of this precinct has been completed. There were some problems and difficulties we faced along the way, but they were overcome smoothly and quickly. Two other precincts are being upgraded, and I hope more will be included in the programme in the coming years. While we look forward to the rest of the constituency to be upgraded, we already

face a new challenge. We have made our estate more beautiful, but this is not enough. It is only the beginning of another task which does not have a completion date.

Our new challenge is to build upon the momentum of physical upgrading and upgrade the sense of neighbourliness in our constituency. A beautiful estate is not a happy estate if the residents are not good neighbours. When we live in multi-storey flats so closely together, we sometimes forget that our small acts may cause annoyance to our neighbours. Everyone has a responsibility to be a good neighbour. And it takes very little effort to be more considerate. For example, squeeze out as much water as possible from the clothing before hanging them out to dry. Keep our plants tidy so that they do not obstruct movement on the corridor. Move the furniture around lightly and carefully, especially at night.

I urge all the residents of MacPherson to build together a model estate of good neighbourliness. Let us start with something very simple. Think of what we don't like to see our neighbours do. Make a wish that they will not do it. Then make a promise that we ourselves will not do it too.

I have asked the grassroots organisations in MacPherson to put up a plan of action to promote good neighbourliness. Over the coming years, we will do three things. First, we will emphasise the message of good neighbourliness in our MacPherson Update newsletter and in our community notice boards. We will put up reminders of the need for good neighbourliness and how to be a good neighbour on our community notice boards. The messages will be put across in a friendly and refreshing manner so that everyone can remember them easily.

Second, we will highlight the theme of good neighbourliness in our community activities and events more prominently. For example, in the children's story-telling competitions and art contests, more attention will be given to this theme.

Thirdly, I notice that there are many residents of MacPherson who are already very considerate, helpful and friendly to the community. They are our good neighbours. I would like to find a way to show appreciation to them. In doing so, I hope that their examples will remind us that it is everyone's duty to be a good neighbour.

From next year, the MacPherson CCC will honour up to 3 residents

each year with the MacPherson Good Neighbour Award. The award is not a contest. There will be very few rules. It does not say who is a better neighbour than whom. It does not favour only residents who have done something exceptional. What it will do is to recognise the simple, daily efforts of our neighbours in making our neighbourhood a happy one.

A small committee has been set up to implement the award. The nominations will be invited from among the residents yourselves. You can nominate any resident whom you think deserves the award. The recipients will be announced every year during the National Day celebrations. In a few years, we will be able to honour many of our good neighbours. By following their examples, we can help to make this constituency even more pleasant to live in.

One project ends, another begins. Step by step with your support, we will make MacPherson a better home.