

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460
Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 3.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

SPEECH BY MR LIM HNG KIANG, MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE OFFICIAL
OPENING OF "URA GALLERY" HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 27 JAN 99 AT 10 AM AT THE URA CENTRE

Sharing the planning vision and experience

Assoc Prof Khoo Cheng Lim, Chairman, URA

Principals and teachers

Community leaders

Ladies and gentlemen

Singapore's unique constraints

With a population of 3 million, Singapore is considered a medium-sized city, like Melbourne for instance. Unlike Melbourne, however, which is within a huge country, Australia, we are a city as well as a country.

2 Within a land area of 647 sq km, we have to meet all the needs of a nation – defence, water catchment, industries, offices, housing and recreation. Some of these are critical for our very survival. Thus, we need to have a large water catchment area, and sufficient space for airports and military training grounds.

3 Singapore is even constrained in the third dimension – height. There is a limit to how high we can build our skyscrapers because of height constraints imposed by our five military and civil airports. This means that in large parts of our island, we can only build up to 12 storeys.

4 This explains why our tallest buildings – the Republic Plaza, UOB Plaza and OUB Building – are only 280-m high, compared with New York's World Trade Centre which stands at a towering 417 m.

Planning to overcome these constraints

5 The Government has taken a multi-pronged approach to overcome Singapore's physical constraints. The broad strategy is to plan long-term, and to plan comprehensively, so as to optimise the use of land within these constraints. The Concept Plan, which is on display here, is the long-range blueprint for our physical development. It ensures that land is properly used to fulfill our strategic objectives. The Urban Redevelopment Authority also does very detailed planning at the local level to optimise every site.

6 Meeting the varied needs of the nation requires planners to perform a difficult balancing act. Through public dialogues and exhibitions, the Government tries its best to explain to Singaporeans the reasons for the various ideas and solutions adopted. However, as such communication can be spread out over a long period, the public may not get the full picture of the considerations and planning which have gone into some of our plans and solutions.

7 This is why the URA has set up this Gallery. The Gallery aims to create awareness and seek the public's understanding of Singapore's unique constraints and the solutions we have taken. And it does so in an educational and entertaining way.

8 Examples of some creative and sometimes unique solutions which we hope this Gallery will allow the public to appreciate are:

- One, storm-water reservoirs, collecting potable water in built-up areas;
- Two, intensifying land use by integrating MRT station with bus interchanges; or by building multi-storey factories;
- Three, creating new, usable spaces by land reclamation and by locating sewerage treatment plants underground;
- And four, minimising the buffer zones around pollutive industries by relocating them offshore.

National Education role

9 While the Gallery will serve the general public and also our foreign

Ihk19990127a

visitors, its chief aim is to have as many of our students as possible visit it as part of the National Education programme. This will certainly be a useful learning experience for our students, enlightening them on how we plan for the future.

10 The various exhibits (interactives, videos and graphic panels) trace Singapore's development and also demonstrate how creative, long-term planning can help to overcome physical constraints. The Gallery also highlights the difficult trade-offs our nation has to make to balance the competing demands of various segments of our population. Understanding these considerations and realities will help the younger generation of Singaporeans to make more realistic and sound decisions in the future.

11 I hope that the Gallery will also instill in Singaporeans a sense of pride, a shared sense of achievement that we have overcome many odds to become what we are today and also engender a sense of emotional belonging and commitment to this tiny island we all call home. Looking at how careful planning has allowed us to successfully solve our problems in the past will give younger Singaporeans a quiet sense of confidence that we can continue to do so and build an equally prosperous future.

12 Investing in this Gallery to educate Singaporeans is investing in our future. I hope that students and Singaporeans at large will find time to visit the Gallery and also contribute ideas on how to make Singapore a better home.

13 I am pleased to declare the URA Gallery officially open.

National Archives of Singapore