

8 DEC 1987

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, 38th Storey, PSA Building, 480 Alexandra Road, Singapore 0511. Tel: 2799794/5.

Release No: 59/NOV
07-1/87/11/28

S7-AM-17

SPEECH BY DR AHMAD MATTAR, MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF ENVIRONMENT BUILDING
IN THE ENV PENTHOUSE ON 28 NOVEMBER 1987 AT 10.00 AM

For civil servants to be able to work in their own Ministry building, a building that is a subject of envy, does not come by chance. It took a lot of planning and hard work to achieve this. We are proud that Environment Building can stand up to compete with all the other buildings in this uptown area as a building of excellence.

The planning for a new building began in 1974, soon after the Ministry of the Environment was set up in 1972. At that time, we had Princess House which was bought over from the HDB to accommodate the newly-established Ministry. Princess House was meant to be dwelling units and the HDB had earlier hastily converted it into offices for their own use. There was already insufficient space for all the departments in the new Ministry and the Sewerage and Drainage Departments were squatting in the Ministry of National Development Building. Unfortunately, in 1976, they had to move to make way for PWD's expansion. In 1978, the two departments had to move again. This was very disruptive and we were not sure if further relocation was coming.

In addition, the departments housed in Princess House were also expanding to cope with increasing area and level of service to an increasing population. The offices in Princess House were cramped and staff were subject to endless traffic noise and dust, Princess House being sited next to a very busy road junction.

Control and administration of departments located at various places were not satisfactory. The need for a new building to accommodate all the departments in the Ministry was clear.

Approval to construct a new Environment Building was obtained in April 82. A 9,200 sq m site located at the junction of Scotts Road and Cairnhill Road was set aside for this purpose. The plan was for a 25-storey tower block and a five-storey annexe. The challenge was to create a working environment that was both pleasant and functional. No more the old government type of offices that were drab and less productive.

The offices were planned on the 'open office' concept utilising system furniture. This promotes office productivity through better ergonomics and gives a more conducive working environment. A step towards greater office automation was taken with the installation of a telelift system to handle documents and files. More electronic communication devices were installed to reduce the need for despatches.

A range of supporting facilities makes it a self-contained building. In the tower block, there is this ENV Penthouse on the 25th storey that overlooks the city and on the fourth storey, there are a 200-seat ENV Theatre, two conference rooms and two exhibition rooms suitable for hosting small international meetings. In the Annexe, the ENV Cafeteria serves all the staff working in the building, providing hawker-style food at reasonable price, in air-conditioned comfort. A multi-purpose hall with recreational and clubhouse facilities add to the list of staff welfare benefits. A child care centre will be set up soon.

The Environment Building was designed using the Computer-Aided Drafting and Design (CADD) System and the construction was monitored with the help of a computer-aided project monitoring (CAPM) system. The Building is the first high-rise structure in Singapore to be constructed using pre-cast hollow concrete slabs. FWD had also used slip-forming in the construction of the service cores to speed up the erection of the building.

Completed at a cost of \$95 million in September 86, the building now houses all the departments of the Ministry with three spare floors for other government departments as well. With all departments under one roof, the Ministry was able to reduce administrative staff and yet serve the public more efficiently. Members of the public need to visit only one building to consult the various departments on all environmental matters.

The Ministry will continue to strive to serve members of the public better. However, we also need the co-operation of members of the public to keep our environment clean. To reinforce public awareness of our one and only environment, the Ministry has designed attractive billboards with the message "Let's Keep our Environment Clean" to extol members of the public to share our mission. These billboards are found on our container trucks plying between Kim Chuan Refuse Transfer Station and the Tuas Incineration Plant. I hope by now, you would have seen some of them along the Pan Island Expressway. Such messages are significantly different from earlier signboards that said "No Littering, Fine \$500". With a more responsive and enlightened public due to the better general education, the Ministry will be adopting a more positive approach in our campaigns against littering, spitting, etc in the future. We do not like to use fines to bring messages across to members of the public. We hope that these subtle messages will remain longer with the individuals than the penalty of

a court fine. With the co-operation of members of the public, the Ministry would be able to keep the cost of environmental services down and Singapore can achieve a higher standard of environmental public health too.

The new working environment has certainly boosted staff morale and enhanced productivity and efficiency in the Ministry. The staff are ready to do their best and achieve excellence. Much of these improvements can be attributed to my predecessor, Mr Ong Pang Boon and the former Permanent Secretary, Mr Lee Ek Tieng. On behalf of the Ministry, I thank them. I would also like to thank Mr Lee Kut Cheung, the PWD Architect in charge of the project, Mr George Sze, Head of PWD's Mechanical Engineering Branch and their staff for contributing to this achievement. The staff in the Ministry's Engineering Services Department and other officers in the other departments have also worked hard to complete the project and should be commended.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I now declare the Environment Building open.

- - - - -