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**SPEECH BY BG (NS) LEE HSIEN LOONG,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,
AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION
ON ESTATE RENEWAL STRATEGY FOR ANG MO KIO
AT ANG MO KIO CENTRAL
ON SUNDAY, 30 JUNE 1996 AT 10.00 AM**

The Government began to develop Ang Mo Kio new town in 1973. Ang Mo Kio was then a farming village. The Housing and Development Board (HDB) had already developed Toa Payoh, our first satellite town, and several other estates. Ang Mo Kio benefited from HDB's experience in these earlier projects. It was therefore better planned in terms of flat designs, the transportation network and social, communal and recreational amenities.

In the 20 years since then, Singapore has progressed tremendously. HDB has built many newer towns after Ang Mo Kio. Each one has had higher standards, better designs and finishes than the previous one. The contrast between Ang Mo Kio and Bishan, Pasir Ris or Chua Chu Kang is great. Ang Mo Kio's facilities were very good in the late 1970s. But now in the late 90s we can do much better.

Residents are familiar with the Main Upgrading Programme (MUP) and the Interim Upgrading Programme (IUP). The first MUP was in Teck Ghee Evergreen, just across the street. It was one of the first precincts in Singapore to be upgraded. You can see the results for yourselves – bigger and better flats, better lift lobbies and facades, attractive gardens and landscaping. Teck Ghee Evergreen is as good as many private condominiums.

We now have two more MUP projects, as well as 12 IUP projects underway.

At the same time, the Town Councils have built many new facilities for residents, including covered walkways, pavilions, amphitheatres and children's playgrounds.

But these are individual projects, not a comprehensive plan to upgrade the whole of Ang Mo Kio town. Now the HDB and Town Council have worked together on a masterplan to rebuild and rejuvenate Ang Mo Kio. It is called the Estate Renewal Strategy, or ERS. This is a plan to improve the residential blocks, the town centre, the schools, and the neighbourhood centres.

The plan will take ten years to implement. But by the time it is completed, Ang Mo Kio will be completely transformed. It should become as good as, and perhaps in some ways even better than, Bishan or Pasir Ris today.

MAIN AND INTERIM UPGRADING PROGRAMMES

The most important part of the ERS is the Main and Interim Upgrading Programmes. Nearly the whole of Ang Mo Kio qualifies for MUP or IUP. The masterplan has divided Ang Mo Kio into 52 precincts for upgrading. So far we

have already identified and announced 15 precincts for upgrading (three MUP and 12 IUP). This is 30 per cent of the total.

Our plan is within 10 years, to upgrade all the rest of the 52 precincts, either with MUP or IUP, and complete the upgrading of Ang Mo Kio new town.

In fact in the next five years, we plan to have 12 more MUP and 20 more IUP projects. This means that in five years, we will either have completed or started work upgrading 47 precincts out of 52. In five years, 90 per cent of the precincts in Ang Mo Kio will be upgraded. Ang Mo Kio will look completely different. Property values will go up.

SELECTIVE EN-BLOC REDEVELOPMENT SCHEME

In addition to the MUP and IUP, HDB will also carry out Selective En-Bloc Redevelopment Scheme, or SERS, for a few precincts in Ang Mo Kio which are suitable for complete redevelopment.

The first SERS precinct will be in Teck Ghee. Six blocks will be involved – 307, 308, 309, 310, 315 and 316. New blocks will be built, and the old ones demolished, in three phases over 10 years. At the end, we will have a totally new precinct, and the residents will own new houses.

Owners of affected flats will receive a very generous package of benefits under SERS. They will be compensated for their old flats at market value. In addition, they get to upgrade to new and bigger flats in the same neighbourhood. The flats will have fresh 99-year leases, and will be sold at a 20 per cent discount. This way the residents can upgrade to new flats without any

financial difficulty. They can stay close to their friends and relatives in Ang Mo Kio, and not have to move out to another estate.

DEVELOPMENT OF ANG MO KIO TOWN CENTRE

We will also be upgrading the Town Centre. Ang Mo Kio Town Centre is well established with a comprehensive range of shopping facilities. But it is facing competition from Junction 8 in Bishan, North Point in Yishun Central, and other new Town Centres.

We will modernise our Town Centre to make it a livelier and more dynamic place, equal to Junction 8 or North Point. We will improve the bus interchange and the transport network, and build new housing and office projects. This will bring in more business for the retailers, as well as jobs opportunities for residents.

UPGRADING NEIGHBOURHOOD CENTRES

At the same time, the Town Councils will upgrade the neighbourhood centres, to improve their facilities, and encourage more residents to shop there. For example, recently Cheng San Town Council recently upgraded the market and food centre in Chong Boon on Avenue 10. This was a very successful project. So we will try to do something similar in other neighbourhood centres.

We have identified three neighbourhood centres for upgrading: Blk. 226A-H in Kebun Baru, Blk 338-342 in Teck Ghee, and Blk 628-632A in Yio Chu Kang.

The Town Council hopes to get some financial help from the Community Improvement Projects Committee (CIPC) for these upgrading projects. At the same time, it is only fair for the shopkeepers, who will benefit from the projects, to help bear a part of the cost. We are working out the details, and will announce them later on.

BUILDING OF NEW PRIMARY SCHOOLS

Another important component of the ERS is the redevelopment of primary schools in Ang Mo Kio. We presently have 15 primary schools. These are the same age as the town. Some are nearly 20 years old. Their buildings and facilities are not as good as the schools which we are now building.

As we redevelop Ang Mo Kio town, we will also rebuild these primary schools. Because the residents are now generally older and have fewer young children, we will need only 11 schools instead of 15. We will progressively redevelop the existing schools over the next 8 to 10 years. The new schools will be larger, and better equipped with modern facilities.

DEVELOPMENT GUIDE PLAN

We have also incorporated the Development Guide Plan (DGP) into our ERS for Ang Mo Kio. The DGP will guide new building projects in our town.

The DGP provides for a good mix of new public and private housing forms. There are sites for two possible Executive Condominiums. We will improve access to and from Ang Mo Kio, and build park connectors to make travelling more pleasant.

Ang Mo Kio will also have a polytechnic. Nanyang Polytechnic should be operational by July 1998. Ang Mo Kio will be one of the few towns to have a polytechnic.

COMPLEMENTARY ROLE OF MPs AND RESIDENTS

The ERS and DGP will transform Ang Mo Kio into an outstanding living environment, with easily accessible residential areas surrounded by major regional parks, and provided with good neighbourhood centres, a town centre, good schools, and convenient public transport.

Whether we can realise our plans, and transform Ang Mo Kio depends on two critical factors - leadership and support.

First, leadership. To implement the plans successfully, we need capable Members of Parliament (MPs), Town Councillors and grassroots leaders, working closely with the Government. Unless these leaders organise the projects, explain them to the residents, give feedback to HDB, and strengthen community ties, the estate renewal will not be successful.

Our Town Councils have good track records. I encourage all the Town Councillors and grassroots leaders to continue their good work, to realise our ten year plan for Ang Mo Kio.

Second, support. Residents must support your leaders, complement their efforts, endorse their team members, and back them up all the way. The leaders need a strong mandate, in order to carry out the programmes we have

started, and to forge ahead with innovative, bold ideas to improve life for all Ang Mo Kio residents.

Let us all work together to realise the Ang Mo Kio ERS, transform Ang Mo Kio, and make it an outstanding new town to live in.

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