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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR MOHAMAD MAIDIN BIN PACKER MOHD, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR MARINE PARADE GRC, AT THE COMPLETION
CEREMONY FOR BALAM GARDEN UPGRADING PRECINCT ON SATURDAY, 30 OCT 1999 AT 7.30 PM AT
AMPHI-THEATRE, BALAM ROAD

National Archives of Singapore

Good evening, distinguished guests, grassroots leaders, residents of Balam
Garden Precinct, Ladies and gentlemen.

2 I am very happy to celebrate with you tonight the completion of the main
upgrading programme (MUP) for Balam Garden Precinct. After enduring the noise and
dust of the upgrading works over the past few years, today, you can finally enjoy
the fruits of the upgrading programme.

3 Many residents have been living in this precinct for a long time; some of
you since your flats were built close to 35 years ago. Back in the sixties, these
flats were considered a luxury, with modern sanitary fittings and plumbing. Then,
you were already the envy of those living in kampongs and squatters. With the
completion of the upgrading works, your precinct has made another dramatic leap

forward in improving your living environment.

4 The physical transformation is obvious. The new recreation promenade at the edge of Pelton Canal has become the hub of life and activity in your precinct. You can now enjoy a wide range of new facilities, such as covered linkways, pavilions, landscaped gardens and fitness corner. There are better and faster lifts, new letterboxes, and a fresh new look for your blocks. Most of you also have an added utility room within your flat. All these improvements are a result of the hard work of the Upgrading Working Committee and grassroots leaders, as well as residents' invaluable feedback which have given rise to many good ideas.

5 No doubt, the physical improvements to your flats are important. But perhaps even more important are the social benefits that have been brought by upgrading. It has helped to preserve the community spirit in this precinct. With upgrading, residents no longer have to uproot themselves from this estate to enjoy a better living environment. You can now feel proud to live here, and have peace of mind knowing that your children will grow up in such healthy and pleasant surroundings. You can continue to enjoy close ties with your neighbours that have been built up over the last 35 years.

6 About 3 months ago, fire broke out in two markets within our Division. The first in Eunos Crescent market, and the second in Geylang Serai. In the case of Eunos Crescent, the stalls were destroyed and grassroots leaders worked relentlessly with the stallholders to set up a temporary market. In Geylang Serai, residents living above the market alerted each other of the fire, and helped their less mobile neighbours evacuate their flat. All these are fine examples of 'gotong royong', or community spirit, which we must continue to preserve.

7 This community spirit is particularly important in a multi-racial society like ours. We must not take the social cohesion and racial harmony we have here for granted. We must continue to build and strengthen the ties amongst the various communities and work closely with each other.

8 When you voted for upgrading, you had already taken a step in the right direction. You have come a long way since then. I hope you will continue to build on what you have achieved in order to make this precinct a better home for all of us.

9 Lastly, on this happy occasion, we should also not forget the contribution of Mr Chin Harn Tong, the former MP for this area. He chaired the Working Committee for Upgrading in this precinct. He worked tirelessly with the grassroots leaders and residents for the successful poll of MUP for this precinct. We owe much to him and wish him well. I am sure he is just as happy as anyone of you here to see such a vast improvement in the living environment in our precinct.

10 On this note, I wish everyone a pleasant evening.

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