

15 NOV 1996

PRESS RELEASE

Release No.: 09/OCT

14-1/96/10/09

96 - LHK - 22

**SPEECH BY MR LIM HNG KIANG,
MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE PUNGGOL 21 EXHIBITION
AT THE RAFFLES CITY CENTRAL ATRIUM
ON WEDNESDAY, 9 OCTOBER 1996 AT 10.30 AM**

In a recent survey by Television Corporation of Singapore (TCS)-Gallup, Singaporeans cite transport and housing as two significant improvements in the last five years. This is not surprising. Our towns are planned to give Singaporeans a quality living environment served by an efficient public transport system. The Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats are now better designed. Residents enjoy a comprehensive range of communal, recreational and educational amenities in our housing estates.

Our public housing programme has achieved key milestones over the years. In the sixties, Singaporeans were living in slums where conditions were cramped and unhygienic. The first objective was to provide shelter for everyone. HDB was set up in 1960 to do this. Its mission was to build as many flats as possible and as quickly as possible to solve the critical housing shortage. By 1970, more than one-third of our population were housed in HDB flats.

The second objective was home ownership. HDB not only provided shelter. We wanted Singaporeans to own their homes. The Home Ownership

Scheme was started on a modest scale at first. The momentum built up quickly and by 1980, nearly half of the population owned their HDB flats.

In 1984, the government announced a bold target - to make Singapore a home-owning society. Today, more than 90 per cent of our homes are owner-occupied. We are well on the way to achieving full home-ownership.

The third objective was good design and quality construction. As a result of the rapid expansion of the public housing programme in the early eighties, construction quality suffered. HDB redressed this quickly. It used prefabricated building components for the common areas such as staircases, parapet walls, panel walls and so on. Strict quality control standards were imposed. The efforts paid off. Singaporeans appreciate the attractive designs and quality construction that are hallmarks of HDB flats nowadays. In 1991, HDB won the World Habitat Award for Tampines as a model settlement.

The fourth objective was asset enhancement. As the HDB flats begin to show their age, the government embarked on the Estate Renewal and Upgrading Programmes. This will be a 15 to 20-year programme to upgrade the existing stock of old flats and refurbish them to the new standards. The results of the Demonstration Precincts were truly remarkable. It was a dramatic transformation. Singaporeans are now convinced of the benefits of the upgrading programme. The upgrading programme is fully underway.

As we stand on the threshold of the next century, we ask ourselves "What is the direction for public housing in the 21st Century?" Prime Minister (PM) Goh has set the goal of making Singapore the Best Home for us in the next

century. As we plan for the new towns to be built in the next century, what are the objectives and characteristics that we should strive for?

You will agree with me that the earlier objectives remain relevant - provide shelter, encourage home-ownership, ensure attractive designs and quality construction, and enhance asset value. But, in addition, we feel that as Singaporeans become better educated, more well-off and better travelled, we should offer a new lifestyle in our new towns for the 21st Century. Hence, the idea of Punggol 21 - our model for 21st century living.

Over the years, the lifestyle in HDB towns has evolved. In the seventies, HDB towns were conceived as "satellite towns", with a town centre and a comprehensive range of facilities. The idea was to have self-contained "satellite towns", complete with light industries to provide employment for residents. As the Singapore economy becomes more sophisticated and employment opportunities expanded, Singaporeans do not just work in the light industries near their homes. They commute extensively to work in financial institutions in the city, science parks, business parks and waferfab plants. Town planning integrated with the national transport network becomes very important. The Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) and the Light Rapid Transit (LRT) have become standard features in our town planning. At the same time, Singaporeans' interests in recreation and leisure have widened considerably. It is no longer sufficient just to provide the standard basketball court in each neighbourhood. A comprehensive range of facilities is now available. And they must be attractively designed.

Punggol 21 therefore has several attractive features. One, a good mix of public and private housing. Two, a cluster of community facilities to foster

community bonding. Three, a car-free living environment. Four, an integrated transport system. And five, an exciting mix of recreational amenities.

Singaporeans will have a choice of private housing, Executive Condominiums or high quality public housing in Punggol 21.

We will build smaller HDB estates of between 1,200 and 2,800 units. This is to encourage community bonding among residents. Each estate will boast of its own distinctive style.

A new idea with Punggol 21 is the development of Community Facilities Clusters. Residents will share schools, libraries, clubs and communal amenities in each cluster. This will be the focus of community life in the neighbourhood.

Another new idea is a pedestrian-friendly environment. Car parks will be built in a special way that will create a car-free neighbourhood green with community facilities.

Travelling in and out of Punggol 21 will be easy and comfortable. Residents will have a direct MRT line to the city. Your trip to Orchard Road will take a much shorter time.

The LRT will give you a pleasant ride around Punggol 21. Residents will not have to walk more than 300 metres to the nearest LRT station. Covered walkways will link your home to the MRT/LRT stations and bus stops.

Punggol 21 will be a fun place. You can shop and eat at two commercial centres. Have fun at six to eight recreational clubs, each with a different theme. Or pop over to a waterfront promenade and two marinas to enjoy the scenic beauty of the waterfront. For a change of scenery, cross over to Coney Island. You will have lots of fun at a 50-hectare regional park, with chalets, clubs, a sea sports centre and camping ground.

Punggol 21 promises Singaporeans a lifestyle that is active, healthy and exciting. It will be the right place to raise families and build communities. More Singaporeans will enjoy this 21st century lifestyle as Punggol 21 will be the model for our new towns in future.

I invite Singaporeans to visit the Punggol 21 exhibition. See for yourself the ideas we have for you in the 21st century. Let us know whether you concur with these ideas and let us have your feedback.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Punggol 21 exhibition open.

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