

# PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG  
AT THE COMPLETION CEREMONY FOR  
UPGRADING OF BOON LAY PRECINCT  
ON TUESDAY, 31 DECEMBER 1996 AT 7.00 PM**

Opposition parties say it is wrong to link upgrading with voting in an election. They are wrong. In an election, each party offers its programme to the voters. The People's Action Party (PAP) offers its programme of assets enhancement, which includes the Housing and Development Board (HDB) upgrading. The opposition parties offer other programmes which do not include plans to improve your estate. It is your right to choose the programme you want. If you choose the opposition, you are rejecting the programme of the PAP. How then can the PAP proceed to upgrade your flats if you reject the programme in the first place?

You have to pay over \$10,000 each for the main upgrading. It is not free. That is why you have to vote again before we actually upgrade your block of flats. We upgrade only if more than 75 per cent of the house-owners vote for it. We do not upgrade if people do not want it. Would you say we are threatening people if we then do not upgrade your flat?

Three years ago, your precinct was the first in Jurong to be chosen for the upgrading programme. This was because of the strong support you had given to Mr Goh Chee Wee. Ninety-three per cent voted for the upgrading, with all six blocks voting for the space-adding item, a balcony.

Your blocks no longer resemble flatted dormitories. With new amenities like an entrance porch, pavilion and barbecue pits, your precinct is comparable to the new HDB estates.

We have been able to upgrade your precinct because PAP policies are practical, sound and good for growth and productivity. We have an education system in which everyone is given a chance to achieve his maximum, making for a well educated, well disciplined and productive workforce. We have a health care system in which everyone's basic needs are catered for and there is minimum waste.

Because of this philosophy, we have sustained high economic growth. With high growth, we have been able to accumulate budget surpluses yearly. With these surpluses, we are improving your homes, increasing your holdings of shares, and topping up your Central Provident Fund (CPF) and Medisave accounts.

The opposition want to abolish the Certificate of Entitlements (COEs), the Goods and Services Tax (GST), have a national health service, and give other subsidies. If their policies are implemented, Singapore's surpluses would disappear. Singapore would end up like most other countries, including developed ones in Europe and America, with budget deficits. Then there can be no HDB upgrading, SERS, covered walkways, Edusave Scholarships and Merit Bursaries, because there is no money for it.

The PAP programme is a total package. It comes with our candidates. When our candidates have your support, some will become Ministers. Together with the other Members of Parliament (MPs), they will implement the PAP programme in your constituency.

Those who want the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) and Dr Chee Soon Juan, or the Workers' Party and Mr J B Jeyaretnam, or the National Solidarity Party (NSP) and Mr Tan Chee Kien, also have to take their programme as a total package. If you want Chia Shi Teck who is a loner, all he promises you is his \$1.0 million Emergency Fund. None of these opposition packages will increase your assets. Their policies would mean increased budget expenditure, slower economic growth, budget deficits instead of surpluses, and a down turn in the value of all your assets, including your homes, your shares, your savings, and the value of the Singapore dollar. This is why we have set out to demolish their policies.

PAP can only carry out its policies if voters support the party. Voters who help to elect a good government which generates surpluses are making a valuable contribution to Singapore. Voters who hope to benefit from the surpluses and yet vote against the party and the policies which generate these surpluses are "free riding".

It is like the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)'s problem with "free riders" who do not join the union, but benefit from the wage packages and fringe benefits won by the union through collective bargaining. Everyone in the unions recognises this as the problem. The NTUC has tackled it by giving attractive benefits to union members, e.g. membership of FairPrice, NTUC Lifestyle centres, Pasir Ris Resort, Orchid Country Club, etc. So membership has risen.

Good government can only endure if people have an incentive to vote for it. Hence we need to give priority to constituencies which support the PAP and its asset enhancement programmes. These are programmes for the whole country. Every constituency will get upgrading, eventually, because I want the whole of Singapore to look beautiful. But those who support good government and the programmes most strongly must come first. You can argue that the money belongs to the people, but you still have to queue up to receive it. The stronger your support, the further ahead you will be in the queue.

We cannot upgrade all estates at the same time, even if they are equally old. We have limited manpower and construction resources. So even in a PAP constituency, precincts have to queue for upgrading.

Take Cheng San, for example. It is a Group Representatives Constituency (GRC) with five MPs. When the PAP wins, it still has to decide on priority. The MPs will know which precinct supports them and their programme more. Other factors being equal, the precinct which shows stronger support for upgrading and other programmes will get it first. But eventually, all will enjoy the same benefits.

Countries everywhere do the same thing. Their political leaders reward those who support and uphold their programmes. In America, the party that wins will support projects of its Senators. It will certainly not support the projects of the losing party at the expense of its own supporters and Senators.

Opposition is entitled to a different view. In which case, they should not field a token number of candidates, hope for a by-election effect,

and gripe about the linking of votes to upgrading. They should field a full slate, to challenge the PAP programme, and offer Singaporeans their alternative: delink votes from upgrading, and give Singaporeans the choice of their total policy package. They must convince the voters that they can produce a surplus every year for upgrading and other local constituency programmes which the PAP offers. But as long as the PAP is in charge, we will link the two, because we believe this is right and will make for a stabler and more enduring political system.

Please continue to support Mr Goh Chee Wee and good government.

I want to use this opportunity to also explain why I have reacted strongly to Tang Liang Hong's view that Chinese should be the dominant language in Singapore.

In a multi-racial and multi-lingual society, there must be an open level playing field for all races. By making English the working language for all Singaporeans, we have created this open level playing field for Malays, Indians, Eurasians and Chinese. All Singaporeans, whatever their races, compete in this open area through English.

In addition to this open field, there are three smaller and closed fields for those who are more conversant in Malay, Tamil or Chinese. Thus, we have Berita Harian, Tamil Murasu and the various Chinese newspapers.

Tang Liang Hong wants to change this by making Chinese more dominant. If we allow this, there will be no open level playing field for the Malays and Indians. The Chinese language will dominate because Singapore

has 76 per cent Chinese. The racial harmony of Singapore will break down because those who do not speak Chinese will not have a level playing field to compete.

Our bilingual policy has worked. Let us not change this. Let us retain our formula for racial harmony - a common open level playing field for all Singaporeans with English as the working language, and three other separate playing fields for those more conversant in Chinese and dialects, Malay and Tamil.

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