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cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)
Subject: (EMBARGOED) Speech by Minister Wong Kan Seng, 26 Mar 00, 10.45 am

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG, MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR BISHAN-TOA PAYOH GRC, AT COMPLETION CEREMONY FOR UPGRADING OF TOA PAYOH COURT ON SUNDAY, 26 MARCH 2000 AT 10.45 AM AT THE LINK BUILDING BETWEEN BLOCKS 7 AND 8, LORONG 7, TOA PAYOH

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This morning, I am glad to celebrate with you the completion of the Main Upgrading Programme (MUP) for your precinct, Toa Payoh Court. This ceremony marks a new lease of life for your precinct.

2 The 7 blocks in this precinct were completed 31 years ago. Now after about 3 years of upgrading, your precinct has been totally transformed. The facades of the apartment blocks have taken a contemporary look. There are more lifts. The lift lobbies have been upgraded. The outdoor space is tastefully landscaped in garden settings with beautiful pavilions. There are also many new

facilities not available before, such as the link building, the amphitheatre and hardcourts. Within your own units, you also have more space for your creative use.

3 The upgrading programme has therefore achieved the dual purpose of improving your living environment, which you long desired, while retaining the community spirit, which you long cherished.

Upgrading of the Estate

4 The residents in Toa Payoh are very fortunate. Toa Payoh was the first town to be comprehensively developed by HDB. When HDB started the MUP 30 years later, Toa Payoh was the first to benefit from it with Kim Keat Court, which is just next door.

5 With the inclusion of the latest precinct at Kim Keat Avenue, a total of 14 precincts in Toa Payoh have been identified for the MUP within a period of about 10 years. Over the next few years, the whole of Toa Payoh will have a new look.

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Selective Enbloc Redevelopment Scheme

6 In addition to MUP, five sites in Toa Payoh have already been identified for Selective Enbloc Redevelopment Scheme (SERS), involving a total of nearly 2,000 flats in 15 blocks.

7 Blocks 145, 151, 152 and 157 were the first to be affected by SERS in Toa Payoh. The residents of these blocks together with the tenants at Block 146 have moved out and the site will be used to build replacement flats for those

affected by SERS in Blocks 136, 137, 140, 164 and 167. This will be the first time that replacement flats for SERS are being built at a site previously occupied by other blocks affected by an earlier SERS announcement. This is what the Ministry of National Development calls “the beginning of the second chapter of SERS development”.

8 What is even more exciting is that HDB will be building the first 40-storey apartment blocks at this replacement site. When completed in 2004, these blocks will be yet another symbol of the success in the improvement of living conditions in Toa Payoh. Toa Payoh will become even more lively and sought after by Singaporeans.

More Housing Options and Facilities

9 HDB is also in the process of building a block of studio apartments near Lorong 4. If demand grows, the Board may identify more sites for the construction of such studio apartments.

10 In 2002, HDB will move its head office to Toa Payoh Town Centre. The complex will be right on top of Toa Payoh MRT Station and will boast the first air-conditioned bus interchange in Singapore. The opening of the new HDB Centre will generate many promising opportunities for the businesses in the Town Centre.

11 Just a few weeks ago, a Regional Sports & Recreation Centre next to SAFRA Clubhouse in Toa Payoh was declared open. The newly refurbished 25-year old Toa Payoh Community Library is also very popular amongst the young and old.

12 Bishan-Toa Payoh Town Council has also embarked on many projects to

improve Toa Payoh, e.g. in the Town Centre, the pedestrian malls as well as the common areas in precincts.

New MUP

13 Today, I am glad to inform you that the Government has decided to offer the MUP to yet another precinct in Toa Payoh. It comprises Blocks 194 and 195 of Kim Keat Avenue. These two blocks were completed 27 years ago. I congratulate Dr Ho Tat Kin, the Member of Parliament, for successfully persuading the Ministry of National Development to upgrade the precinct. A Working Committee will be formed over the next few months to work out the MUP package for the precinct.

14 Members of Parliament play an important role in upgrading programmes. They put in a lot of effort in justifying and convincing the Government to offer the programme to any one particular precinct. Throughout the process, Members of Parliament also work very closely with grassroots leaders and other relevant agencies to ensure that the projects are successfully completed to the satisfaction of the residents.

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Community Bonding

15 With all these physical developments and changes to Toa Payoh Town, it is becoming a model town in Singapore once again. It was the first to be comprehensively renewed. Residents and the public alike will, therefore, be able to enjoy a quality lifestyle brought about by a better living environment, complete with quality housing, pleasant surroundings, bustling commercial activities, sports, recreational and library facilities.

16 Whilst we are busy improving the physical living environment, I strongly believe that it is also equally, if not more, important to think about what these changes mean for us in terms of community bonding. A community does not just mean people living together, sharing common physical infrastructure and using common facilities. What binds a community together are the genuine concern for one another's well-being and welfare, and the knowledge that all exist in a mutually responsible and helpful surrounding.

17 One of the aims of designing HDB towns on precinct concept is to facilitate and encourage greater social interaction among residents. Thus, we should make full use of all the opportunities for community bonding brought about by the physical developments in our living environment. Through community bonding, we can foster greater inter-racial understanding and strengthen our social cohesion. As you enjoy living in this beautifully upgraded precinct, I hope you will also contribute generously to developing the necessary heartware of the estate and Singapore as a whole.

18 On this note, I wish all of you the best in making the
Toa Payoh Town and Singapore a wonderful place to live in.

Thank you