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Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • Tel. 3307269 / 3307270 / 3307271

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SPEECH BY MR LEE YIOK SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT), AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF HOUGANG
SWIMMING COMPLEX ON SATURDAY, 23 MAY 1987 AT 6.00 PM

Over the past 27 years, the Housing and Development Board has created a pleasant living environment for Singaporeans living in new towns. The impact of its housing programme in reshaping the environment can be seen throughout Singapore. The Hougang New Town is a typical example. Before HDB started work on this new town in June 1979, much of this area was swampy and was used as a dumping ground for refuse.

However, the picture today is entirely different. Modern buildings and roads now stand on the once swampy land. A whole new town with comprehensive facilities and services has been created to meet residents' needs. Hougang New Town is now a popular choice for flat applicants. When fully developed in around five years' time, it will have 41,000 flats and a population of about 120,000. The Town Centre will have more facilities and in three years' time, triple its present size.

When the HDB was formed in 1960, the priority was to build flats quickly to overcome the acute housing shortage. The emphasis then was on quantity and speed, rather than quality.

With the immediate housing problem solved, the HDB then concentrated on providing a total living environment to meet the rising living standard. New towns built since the seventies are planned comprehensively. They are virtually

self-sufficient. Besides commercial outlets, community areas, religious sites, sports and recreational facilities are also provided.

Land set aside for such non-residential development in the new towns has increased over the years. For example, in Toa Payoh New Town, some 60 per cent of available land was used for this purpose. The provision increased to 65 per cent for those built later, like the Ang Mo Kio New Town. Since 1982, the proportion of land earmarked for such uses has averaged 66 per cent.

In a typical new town, sports and recreational facilities provided include a swimming complex, a sports complex, jogging tracks, football fields, multi-purpose courts, town and neighbourhood parks.

The financial contribution by the government in promoting sports and recreation for new town residents is substantial. For instance, in the financial year 1985/86, recreation, community welfare and amenities totalling \$52 million were completed by the HDB. These investments represent a direct subsidy from the government to benefit our people and are not included in the cost of flats.

Over the past 17 years, the HDB has developed 12 swimming complexes, two indoor stadiums and six sports complexes. These facilities, after their completion, were leased to the Singapore Sports Council at a nominal TOL fee.

Surveys by the SSC show that jogging and swimming have become the most popular sporting activities among Singaporeans. Since Singapore is an island state, swimming is a natural choice. The strategic location of swimming complexes in population centres and the low admission fee have also helped to increase its popularity.

Swimming complexes themselves represent optimum land use in our densely populated country. Although new swimming complexes continue to appear, the number of users remain very high. The Sports Council last year alone recorded 6.4 million users in the 20 swimming complexes it manages. This is an increase of 70 per cent compared with the 3.8 million users 10 years ago.

Another three new swimming complexes are ready for use this year. The first to be opened is this Hougang Swimming Complex which has been developed at a cost of \$9.3 million. The others are the Bukit Batok and Yishun swimming complexes which will be ready in a few months' time. These, together with the 12 already handed over to the Singapore Sports Council for management, involve a total development cost of \$91 million for the HDB.

Few cities in the world can boast of having swimming and other sports complexes in every new town. With such a wide variety of sporting facilities, residents are able to participate in many types of healthy recreational activities almost at their doorstep. I hope this supportive environment will encourage everyone, young or old, to take up at least one sport.

It now gives me great pleasure to witness the handing over of this swimming complex by the Chairman of HDB to the Chairman of Singapore Sports Council and to declare this complex open.

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