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Singapore Government

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**SPEECH BY MR LEE YIOK SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT), AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE
WOODLANDS SPORTS COMPLEX AT WOODLANDS AVENUE 3
ON SATURDAY, 5 AUGUST 1989 AT 6.00 PM**

I am very pleased to be here with you this evening to celebrate the official opening of Woodlands New Town Sports Complex, comprising of the swimming complex and the sports stadium. This evening, HDB will also be handing over the management of Woodlands Sports Complex to the Singapore Sports Council. Today's opening is indeed a happy occasion for all of us as it ushers in a new stage of living experience for our residents here in Woodlands.

HDB has plans for Woodlands New Town to grow bigger and busier. When the building programme for Woodlands is fully completed, it will have grown three-fold, from the present 22,000, to a total of 66,000 flats. Woodlands will then become Singapore's largest new town.

In planning any New Town, HDB ensures that there is also a full range of facilities and amenities for the convenience of the residents. This sports complex is just such an example of the facilities provided to meet the recreational needs of the residents.

Singaporeans have grown more affluent over the years. They now prefer bigger and better quality flats. To meet this preference, HDB will be converting some 900 three-room and four-room flats into bigger flats. This conversion programme will be completed by end 1990.

We are presently on the verge of entering a new threshold in public housing in Singapore. Earlier this month, the Government announced its large scale plans to upgrade existing HDB flats to a standard comparable with the latest HDB flats or even that of private condominiums. The Upgrading Programme aims to meet the aspirations of residents in the older HDB flats for better quality flats. HDB residents in the older flats will thus be able to enjoy the latest standards in fittings and finishes without having to relocate and give up community ties built up over the years.

To enable this programme to get off to a smooth start, HDB will be conducting pilot projects to test out the design changes, construction techniques, skills and workmanship involved.

The Upgrading Programme will be phased out over a period. The cost of the upgrading works will be shared between the Government, Town Councils and the lessees. The Government intends to bear a major portion of the cost for improvement works to the precinct and the block. The cost of improvement works within the flat, on the other hand, will be borne mainly by the lessee.

The Upgrading Programme will generate greater demand for skilled construction workers. It has been estimated that a total of about 5,000 workers would be required to cater for the upgrading works. For the programme to be a success, there must be good project management as well as skilled, well-trained and disciplined workers. I wish to take this opportunity to encourage contractors in the building industry to take full advantage of this programme to upgrade their technology and workers' skills to a higher level. Contractors should play an active role in encouraging their workers to attend courses conducted by CIDB to upgrade their skills.

To ensure that HDB constructs according to demand, HDB introduced a new booking system for HDB flats on 3 Jul 89. This change was necessary as Singaporeans no longer look for just a roof over their heads. The present day HDB flat applicant is more discerning. He wants better designed flats and is also willing to pay for quality finishes and premium factors such as a good location, view, design and so on. This new booking system will thus enable HDB to better meet the rising expectations of Singaporeans. On HDB's part, this means that they can achieve greater customer satisfaction.

The new booking system is therefore a necessary step in the right direction. Of the 45,000 applicants who are presently on the waiting list, 20,000 have already been invited to express their choices for the various new towns under the new system. To date, 19,800 of these applicants have responded. This shows that the public have generally accepted the new booking system. The second batch of letters inviting the next 20,000 applicants to make their selection is expected to reach them by mid September. I urge these applicants as well as those who wish to apply for a flat, to give their full support to the new booking system. It works to your benefit.

It is my pleasure now to declare the Woodlands Sports Complex open. Thank You.