

**TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER LEE HSIEN LOONG
AT RIVERVALE COMMUNITY CLUB OPENING CEREMONY
ON 30 JULY 2022 AT RIVERVALE COMMUNITY CLUB**

Good morning everybody!

Very, very happy to be here this morning with you all for the opening of Rivervale Community Club. It has been a long time since we've had crowds like this, but it's the first time in seven years I've had lion dance, kompang and Indian drums. Noise, excitement and energy, a very happy time to be together. I'm happy also to see that the facilities are being enjoyed by the residents and they are here using all sorts of new equipment and services, cooking classes at the culinary studio, pre-school classes for the little ones, fitness workouts at the sports and fitness club, F45.

These are all new facilities; I am glad you find them useful and I hope that you also remember how it has changed from the old Rivervale CC at the Block 193 void deck. It was a small but cosy CC, frequented by residents. But over time [it became] too small because Sengkang's residents population grew, so we had to build a new CC, which was why in 2016 we announced our plans to build a stand-alone CC, with expanded facilities to offer a wider range of programmes.

We reached out to many of you, especially those actively using the old CC, to give us ideas and suggestions on how to make the new building more useful for everyone.

At that time, Sengkang East was under the PAP. Then in the 2020 General Elections, it went to the opposition, Sengkang GRC. But the Government remains committed to serving residents here in Sengkang. So work on the CC carried on, because the needs of the residents remain – needs for a larger community space, for a wider range of facilities and programmes. Meanwhile, the PA continued its

good work bringing Rivervale residents together and strengthening the community.

Whether Sengkang East is in a PAP or opposition ward, many activists and volunteers continue to serve on the Community Club Management Committee (CCMC) and on its sub-committees, to organise activities and programmes for residents.

We also continue to maintain a full grassroots network to inform residents about government policies, to help vulnerable households through many government assistance schemes and to gather feedback so that we continue to have a good sense of the ground.

Mr Goh Yeow Tin is the Grassroots Advisor in Sengkang GRC taking charge of the Sengkang East Grassroots Organisations. Yeow Tin served with me for 33 years in Teck Ghee in the grassroots, including for many years as CCC Chairman. He did an outstanding job guiding Teck Ghee through many major projects and programmes, including upgrading our CC in Teck Ghee, and overseeing many welfare schemes for our residents. So I have every confidence that he will serve residents in Sengkang East well, including providing leadership and guidance on developing Rivervale CC and running its programmes with Kelvin and the team here.

Role of CCs

Our CCs are an important part of Singapore's social landscape. They provide shared spaces for community activities and events and create opportunities for residents from different races and social backgrounds to meet, to interact, to bond.

The CCs are getting better and nicer too. In the early years, our first CCs had very basic facilities. Perhaps a single black-and-white television in front of an open space, where the kampong people would

gather to watch the news or chase the latest primetime drama. Or a few ping-pong tables, where kids would battle each other as the rain pelted down on the zinc roof overhead.

Today things are quite different. Our homes and living standards have vastly improved. Most of us don't stay in kampongs anymore, but in modern flats. I think there is only one kampong left in Singapore, which is Kampong [Lorong] Buangkok. Residents at home not only have television sets, but also everybody has a smart phone in his or her hands. We no longer huddle in front of a communal television – except perhaps to join fellow supporters to cheer our favourite football clubs, either Man U or Liverpool.

But the need to have common spaces in our society is still there. That is why we continue to develop our CCs – upgrade the infrastructure, update the programmes – to meet residents' changing needs. I am glad to see that residents here have been actively involved in conceptualising this new CC, and in organising the activities and of course participating in the activities.

For example, Madam Ong Swee Choo who is a volunteer who conducts dance and qigong exercises in the early mornings and encourages fellow seniors to lead an active and healthy lifestyle.

Or Mr Xavier Ang, who with his friends helped to develop a co-working space in Rivervale CC called “The Cube” so that young people (like him) have a conducive space to discuss work and collaborate on projects. I am glad that The Cube will be ready by the end of the year.

Many other such community-led initiatives have kept our CCs as focal points of the community, and fostered engagement among our residents. In times of crisis, the CCs are also essential as nodes to support the community.

For example, during the pandemic, our CCs, our grassroots leaders, our community volunteers were invaluable in our efforts to fight the virus. They helped to distribute masks, hand sanitisers, TraceTogether tokens, they delivered food packs to those isolated at home; they helped residents to apply for financial aid or to seek jobs.

When the vaccines became available, we used many of the CCs as vaccination centres. With the help of the staff and volunteers, we could smoothly execute our national vaccination programme. This was a key factor which enabled us to have one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, and transition to living with COVID-19 today.

Our CCs throughout the pandemic continued to engage residents and keep the community united. They helped seniors make use of technology to stay socially active and connected to the community. They pivoted creatively to online activities. E.g. I hear that Rivervale CC conducted a virtual overseas tour to South Korea, which I hear was very well-received. Next time I will join the group too.

Conclusion

I would like to thank Sengkang East GRLs, our CC staff and grassroots volunteers for all their effort and hard work. I should mention Mr Charles Chong who was a former Advisor who started this new CC project. Mr Raymond Lye, who is now the CCC Honorary Chairman, who was previously the CCC Chairman and served for many years, a key figure in Sengkang East under successive grassroots Advisors.

Also Mr Kelvin Ang, who is CCC Chairman now, and Mr Tang Wing Fai, who is CCMC Chairman, as well as all their CCC and CCMC members, who have the heavy responsibility to plan and organise activities and serve residents day after day.

I hope you will all continue to contribute to our community, and that your public spirit and shining example will encourage more people to step forward as volunteers. Let us always make our CCs places where residents feel a sense of belonging and community with one another.

So now, we are happy, we can declare Rivervale CC properly open. Thank you very much.