

CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT



LOOKING FORWARD AND KEEPING AHEAD

Singapore faces many challenges as the new century unfolds, not least of which is our economic competitiveness. To maintain our competitive edge, greenery and its concurrent lifestyle benefits play key roles. Singapore has long been recognised as a tropical garden city. However, as China and neighbouring countries develop, other cities such as Shanghai, Shenzhen and Putrajaya in Malaysia are beginning to see the value that parks and gardens add to their cityscape. From emphasising development at the expense of greenery, they are coming, as Singapore did decades ago, to the realisation that the human mind and spirit need parks and nature, if life is to be lived in good health and balance.

Increasingly, those cities able to meet the rising expectations of residents and expatriates will stand apart. Singapore is not immune to such competition and we must, if we are to provide our people with the best environment to live, work and play, ensure that we maintain our position as a premier Garden City against the best. To that end, NParks will be benchmarking itself against best practices in the managing of greenery in established world cities.



HELPING PEOPLE LIVE LIFE'S ESSENTIAL MOMENTS IN OUR PARKS

We must remember that NParks' main duty will always be to unlock the value of our parks and greenery for the benefit and pleasure of the public. If we conscientiously keep at this, Singapore will remain competitive with any other garden city in the world as a matter of course. Similarly, helping our people develop greater rootedness to Singapore will come naturally if we continue to do a good job of introducing dynamic initiatives and leave people with good memories of their time in our parks. I am happy to be able to say that in this regard, NParks continued to provide and expand programmes such as the Park Watch and the Adopt-A-Park schemes, which offer

meaningful opportunities for the public to contribute to civic society. NParks also introduced a rich variety of new activities in our suburban parks such as Dance @t Parks, PLAYing in the Parks and Swinging Jazz, so that enjoyment of events in our parks was brought to as wide an audience as possible. Finally, events such as the Singapore Orchid Festival, and the World Of Music, Arts & Dance (WOMAD) helped to maximise public usage and enjoyment of our major parks.



BUILDING GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

In addition to providing new programmes and events, NParks continued its commitment to upgrade and improve Singapore's green infrastructure, and to provide different experiences to meet park users' needs. The MacRitchie and Kranji Nature Trails were launched, bringing Singaporeans and visitors closer to nature. NParks also launched the beautiful and scenic Raffles Terrace at Fort Canning Park, and the new aerial boardwalk at Kent Ridge Park.

NParks is also working with our partner agencies to provide more recreational opportunities as well as to enhance accessibility to our parks. One such initiative is the joint NParks-URA effort to provide a link from Mount Faber Park through Telok Blangah Hill Park to Alexandra Park. This will make it easier for park users to enjoy the expanse of the parks at the Southern Ridges.

Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve celebrated its 10th Anniversary, a milestone that few would have thought possible when the reserve was just an idealistic concept during the early days before it came into being. In addition, Sungei Buloh was given the honour of being designated as Singapore's first ASEAN Heritage Park. The Singapore Botanic Gardens also hosted the inaugural Singapore Orchid Festival 2003, which saw thousands visiting the Gardens to view and enjoy the showcase of the best orchids in Asia. And at the Istana, President S R Nathan launched the 'Gardens of Istana' book, which chronicles the distinguished history of the Istana gardens.

WE MUST REMEMBER THAT NPARKS' MAIN DUTY WILL ALWAYS BE TO UNLOCK THE VALUE OF OUR PARKS AND GREENERY FOR THE BENEFIT AND PLEASURE OF THE PUBLIC. IF WE CONSCIENTIOUSLY KEEP AT THIS, SINGAPORE WILL REMAIN COMPETITIVE WITH ANY OTHER GARDEN CITY IN THE WORLD AS A MATTER OF COURSE.



DEVELOPING THE HORTICULTURAL INDUSTRY

It is a fact that for our Garden City to continue to meet the future needs of the public, there must be a trained and expert core of horticultural and landscaping workers and professionals. To achieve this, NParks is helping to strengthen the local horticultural and landscaping industry. The first step, already accomplished, was the setting up of the National Skills Recognition System (NSRS) where workers' landscaping and horticultural skills are improved by training and certification.

With the NSRS now in place, NParks is taking a step further by setting up a dedicated section within the organisation to champion industry development in April 2004. It will focus on manpower development, business development and technical development. Even as current efforts to develop manpower continue apace, the new section will also promote business development with the private sector through events such as horticultural shows.



NEW RESPONSIBILITIES IN MARINE CONSERVATION

On a different note, marine conservation has become more pressing in recent years as major development projects of national importance impact upon Singapore's marine environment and its biodiversity. NParks was recently entrusted with a role in the management of this marine biodiversity. New thrusts that NParks will undertake in the biodiversity field include the collation of data on biodiversity, building up a biodiversity reference centre, and conducting marine biodiversity surveys. These will be part and parcel of NParks' commitment to the Singapore Green Plan 2012, which is our national blueprint for environmental sustainability for the next decade. Apart from marine biodiversity, NParks will also continue to contribute to the Green Plan through its on-going involvement in the Action Programme Committee on Conserving Nature.



ENHANCING ORGANISATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

To help us meet the challenges ahead, we will continue to adopt practices and policies that encourage our people to create value in their respective fields through a systematic and holistic approach to training and development that aligns our staff's learning activities to NParks' business objectives.

At the same time, NParks will monitor the progress of its new initiatives. To keep sight of the bigger picture while the organisation progresses, NParks will also be using more indicators to effectively measure performance, and communicating to employees their roles and responsibilities. This will facilitate the direct linking of policies and processes to goals, so as to further streamline our current work practices and measures. Together with financial indicators, this will help instill in our employees an even greater sense of value consciousness in their course of work.



NEW BOARD MEMBERS

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank Mr Charles Ho, Mr Khoo Chin Hean, Mr Liak Teng Lit, Mr Pang Kin Keong, Dr Chitra Rajaram, and Mr Simon Tay, who have stepped down from the Board, for their counsel and unstinting support. I would also like to take the opportunity to welcome Mrs Theresa Foo, Mr Goh Chye Boon, Ms Priscylla Shaw, Mr Daren Shiau, Mr Edward Wong Hong Yan and Mr Adrian Zeche, who joined the Board on 6 June 2004.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks and appreciation to our staff, sponsors, volunteers and partners for their contribution and commitment towards our successes over the past year and their continued support to meet the challenges of the year ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Leo Tan', positioned above the printed name.

PROFESSOR LEO TAN
Chairman
National Parks Board
August 2004