

**OPENING SPEECH BY MR EDWARD D’SILVA,  
CHAIRMAN, PUBLIC HYGIENE COUNCIL,  
AT THE LAUNCH OF “KEEP CLEAN, SINGAPORE! 2023”  
ON SATURDAY, 13 MAY 2023**

Minister for Education, Mr Chan Chun Sing

Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Sustainability and the Environment,  
Mr Baey Yam Keng

Advisers

Permanent Secretary for Sustainability and the Environment, Mr Stanley  
Loh

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

- 1 Good morning. Welcome to the launch of this year’s Keep Clean, Singapore! 2023 (KCS 2023) campaign. I am very happy to see so many of you taking time off your precious weekend to join us in making a statement for keeping Singapore clean. The strong turnout today shows that this is close to the hearts of many Singaporeans.
- 2 The Keep Clean, Singapore! (KCS) campaign is not new. Only the name is new. This national campaign to instil in Singaporeans the importance of keeping public spaces clean began way back in 1968 as the Keep Singapore Clean campaign. It was launched by Mr Lee

Kuan Yew, our Prime Minister then. If you recall, he led by example by sweeping the streets at the Gerakkan Pembersihan Bandar Raya Singapura in 1959. He knew that he had to keep Singapore clean if he wanted to build a modern and strong economy and raise the standard of living for Singaporeans.

- 3 Fast forward to 2011, the Public Hygiene Council was set up to complement the government's education and enforcement efforts to maintain high standards of personal and public cleanliness and hygiene.
- 4 Keep Clean, Singapore! is the PHC's annual flagship initiative to drum home the message that we are responsible for keeping Singapore clean. It is a platform for the PHC to engage residents and encourage them to take action, be involved and be committed – individually, as a family, or as a community – to keeping Singapore clean. And they can do this wherever they are – at home, in the neighbourhood playground, park, market, hawker centre, food court or shopping mall. We are heartened that over the years, many Ministries, statutory boards, businesses, schools, Institutes of Higher Learning, grassroots organisations and community groups

have supported us in the activities and programmes we have launched.

- 5 We appreciate the strong partnerships that we developed with different partners. It enabled us to expand the quarterly SG Clean Day from the open areas of housing estate to include the reservoirs, public parks, dormitories, attractions, shopping malls, and public transport nodes. As a result, we were able to amplify and strengthen the keep Singapore clean message.
- 6 Our partnership with the Ministry of Education (MOE) started almost a decade ago in 2014 when we launched the Keep Singapore Clean Movement (KSCM) in schools. With the schools' support, students take ownership of the cleanliness of their schools and learn the values of responsibility and care through practice.
- 7 To further engage our younger ones, we introduced the Keep SG Clean Supermons characters last year. Each of them represents the core focus of the PHC, litter-free, tray return and good toilet etiquette. We hoped these characters would help reinforce the value of keeping shared spaces clean amongst the youths.

8 And in the Keep SG Clean Comic Strip Competition that we co-organised with MOE, students have to make use of our Keep SG Clean Supermons characters to create comic strips to inspire everyone to start caring about the cleanliness at public spaces. We will be presenting prizes to those that created the winning entries later this morning. I hope all these artistic efforts will not be wasted or lost, but will instil a good understanding of what it means to keep Singapore clean, and spark a desire to do something.

#### Stocktake of PHC's programmes

9 We have done well in working with schools to educate our future generation on the importance of keeping Singapore clean. But there is still plenty of work to be done. As we know, changing human behaviour is never easy. Especially habits that are deeply rooted. Some of us may remember the "good old days" when litter bugs were slammed with heavy fines and penalties. These shaped our behaviour and we earned the reputation of being the cleanest city in the region.

10 I wish we have progressed from that and don't need fines anymore. This is why the PHC is focused on working with the schools, to

nurture every child to become an individual who is responsible for cleanliness not just in his school but everywhere in Singapore.

- 11 In my study visit to Taipei in 2014, I saw students there clean up not just their classrooms, but also the whole school, including the toilets, hallways and other common areas. As a result, many of these children grow up to value cleanliness. They also understand that it is everyone's responsibility to maintain the cleanliness in public spaces. We can learn from them.
- 12 We then worked with the MOE to introduce daily school cleaning for students in 2016, and subsequently rolled out the Buddy Clean Workshop . The daily involvement in cleaning up the school helped inculcate in our youths a sense of responsibility and care for their own space and shared spaces, and cultivate good habits for life.
- 13 We also work closely with the grassroots to extend our reach to the community. We are happy to see the Sustainable Bright Spot programme continue to grow each year, as more and more residents are encouraged to pick up after themselves and take pride in keeping their neighbourhood clean.

- 14 We have also extended our CleanPods to the housing estates to make it more convenient for residents to draw litter-picking tools to conduct clean-ups in their neighbourhood.

## Conclusion

- 15 As I have been reflecting on the work of the PHC and the results of what we have done, I have been asking myself “is there something missing in all this?” And I recall the accounts about how the Japanese queue at bus-stops, return their trays after eating, and let the elderly and women who are pregnant cut the taxi queue. That is courtesy and graciousness! When we hold the door open for others, and let those in the lift come out before we go in, we are being courteous and considerate to them. So it is when we return our trays after eating and keep the table clean for others. Being courteous and considerate is at the root of everything we do.
- 16 I am thus happy that our campaign message this year, “Clean it Forward for a Better SG!” seeks to encourage everyone to create a better Singapore by being considerate to others. Simple acts like leaving behind a clean table after our meals, leaving a clean toilet after use, and leaving behind a clean environment will help us make a better Singapore.

17 So, let's all Clean it Forward for a Better SG!

Thank you.