

Enough HDB flats to meet rising demand: Khaw Boon Wan

By Melissa Chong



Minister for National Development Khaw Boon Wan (Photo: MND)

SINGAPORE: During a "Our Singapore Conversation" dialogue session, national development minister Khaw Boon Wan said Singapore has the ability and resources to meet the demand for more HDB flats.

Housing was one of the hot issues at the dialogue at Sembawang Group Representation Constituency (GRC).

The question posed at the session was: what kind of Singapore would you like to have in 2030?

More than 300 residents participated in the dialogue.

Ellen Lee, the Member of Parliament (MP) for Sembawang GRC said: "There are groups who are concerned about housing; on how can they afford housing for their children. Of course these are issues that will have to be thrashed out, because it's a question of expectation as well."

In response, Mr Khaw assured Singaporeans there will be more than enough HDB flats to accommodate the rising demand.

In the last two years, the government had built about 25,000 flats a year - with 2012 breaking the record for the largest supply of Build-To-Order (BTO) flats in a year, he said.

The BTO system was introduced in 2002.

Next year, at least 20,000 more flats will be built.

Mr Khaw, who is also a MP for Sembawang GRC, added this figure exceeds the number of first-time marriages per year in Singapore - which is about 15,000.

He said even if Singapore's birth rate increases, the number of new flats will be able to accommodate the increased demand.

Another concern raised by participants was the affordability of flats.

The minister said that prices of resale flats are high because there is still an imbalance between supply and demand, but he is confident that prices will adjust within the next few years.

Apart from housing, participants also discussed the values that are important to Singapore.

Clarine Chai, a student at Singapore Management University, felt that Singaporeans should have a sense of gratitude, "rather than keep complaining (sic) about the faults of Singapore".

"We need to integrate ourselves and work as a team, as a community," said Garry Luyun, a new Singapore citizen.

Retiree Chong Weng Yoke suggested focusing on moral education from young to inculcate values such as respect.

Ideas gathered from participants will be categorised into themes for more discussions in the next phase of the national conversation.

Meanwhile, a similar dialogue was held at a Bishan North coffee shop, and everyone was invited to join in.

Bishan North CCC hoped that more residents would share their ideas, by holding the session in an informal setting.

Speaking in English and Mandarin, Minister of State for Transport and Finance Josephine Teo spoke to residents about their concerns.

Mrs Teo, who is also a MP for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC, said many residents raised bread-and-butter issues, including education and housing.