

SPEECH BY MR DESMOND LEE, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AND FAMILY DEVELOPMENT AND SECOND MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT, AT THE GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY OF TAHIR FOUNDATION CONNEXION AT SMU ON 27 AUGUST 2018, 8.30 AM

Mr Ho Kwon Ping,

Professor Arnoud De Meyer,

Dato Sri Dr Tahir,

Distinguished guests,

Faculty and Students,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1 I am delighted to join you for this morning's ground breaking ceremony.

2 As the only campus in the heart of our city centre, SMU has developed rapidly since you were established in 2000. With nearly 10,000 students today, you have added much to the life and vitality of the Bras Basah.Bugis precinct, which is a vibrant arts, cultural and education district.

3 Your campus is a welcoming open space, hosting numerous student activities and precinct events such as the annual Singapore Night Festival, Music For A Cause, the Singapore Biennale, the SMU Arts Festival, and the SMU Challenge, amongst many others.

4 SMU faculty and students have also been, and continue to be, actively involved in the community around you.

Enhancing the vibrancy and accessibility of Bras Basah.Bugis Precinct

5 The Tahir Foundation Connexion will be a significant addition to your campus.

6 To your faculty and students, the new building promises to be a dynamic learning environment, reflecting your spirit of innovation and ethos of collaboration. It will be a co-study, co-work learning hub for the students to engage in multi-disciplinary work and experiential learning, and to work collaboratively.

7 Some of the facilities will be open 24/7. You are also partnering The Ascott Group on lyf@SMU at the nearby SMU Labs Building to test some of these co-study and co-working concepts. I had the privilege to visit it a couple of months ago as well. And to support the SMU-X pedagogy, this new building will contain active learning spaces where your students can meet industry practitioners to work on real-life problems, and to socialize and network with each other across disciplines.

8 The Tahir Foundation Connexion will also strengthen your connectedness to the community and the rest of Singapore. The development can host public programmes by your partners. It is designed to be an inviting public space, where members of the public can also congregate.

9 It serves as a physical connection, by providing additional routes for people to get to Fort Canning, Armenian Street and the surrounding areas more easily. URA, NParks, and other agencies will be pedestrianising a large part of Armenian Street, turning it into a park and restoring Fort Canning Park and its surroundings, which you can enjoy and use for your events and learning.

10 On the whole, when completed, more people will get to enjoy this city campus. The injection of more student life will add to the vitality of Bras Basah. Bugis as an arts, cultural and educational district.

Supporting the push for adoption of productive technologies

11 I would also like, on behalf of MND and BCA, to thank you for supporting the push under our tripartite Industry Transformation Map for greater adoption of Design for Manufacturing and Assembly (DfMA) technologies. The Tahir Foundation Connexion will soon be the first large-scale Mass Engineered Timber (MET) development in the city centre.

12 With this technology, you can typically expect to save up to 1/3 of construction manpower. I also hear that you are studying the adoption of prefabricated mechanical, electrical and plumbing (MEP) systems and modules for this project.

13 With the adoption of DfMA technologies, this building can be built faster, and with lesser manpower needed on site. This will certainly reduce disamenities to people living, working and playing in the surrounding areas during the time of construction, and minimise impact on your existing campus users. You can also expect improved quality and coordination.

14 In fact, with all things going well, we look forward to the building being completed in 2019 – which will be quite a feat.

Contributing to environmental sustainability

15 Another noteworthy point is that, when completed, the Tahir Foundation Connexion will be the first on-site mid-rise Net Zero Energy Building (NZEB) in our city centre. This means it is self-sustainable with its own power generated from a photovoltaic (PV) system. In addition, other green technologies and features include passive cooling, and smart LED lighting. Together, these will bring you long-term tangible energy cost savings of more than 500 megawatt hour (Mwh) per year.

16 On this note, I'm happy to share that this new building design is currently undergoing assessment for BCA Green Mark certification.

17 The completed Connexion will take us another step forward in our aspiration of achieving super low energy or even zero energy buildings in Singapore.

Conclusion

18 On that note, I would like to extend warm congratulations to SMU and the Tahir Foundation on today's groundbreaking! I also thank the Tahir Foundation and Dato Sri Dr Tahir for your contribution to Singapore's education landscape, and the closeness of the relationship of Singapore and Indonesia.

19 Thank you.