

Barrier Free Access

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Estates run by PAP to be barrier-free by 2011

Facilities like ramps will be fitted to help older people, the disabled to get around

By TAN HUI YEE

WITH the greying population and people with special needs in mind, public estates under the 14 People's Action Party town councils are being retrofitted with facilities like ramps and railings.

By 2011, even wheelchair-bound residents in more than 8,200 housing blocks islandwide will find it easy to move around their estates.

The cost to the 14 councils in retrofitting the precincts and blocks under their care will come to \$32 million over the next five years.

The councils will be consulting residents on the upcoming work in their area. Retrofitting in over 1,300 blocks has already started and will be completed by next month.

The plans, announced yesterday, tie in with the recent push by the Government to make Singapore more friendly to its fast-ageing popula-

tion, as well as those with special needs.

The measures include putting in lifts that stop on every floor in public estates, introducing disabled-friendly buses and reviewing building rules to ensure ease of access for all.

Last year, the Housing Board introduced flats that people can grow old in comfortably with bigger light switches and enough space in toilets to install grab bars if needed.

Dr Teo Ho Pin, coordinating chairman of the PAP town councils, told reporters yesterday that these accessibility features were part of the overall drive by the Government to cater to the lifestyle needs of older persons.

According to the General Household Survey 2005, 8.4 per cent of Singapore's resident population are at least 65 years old. By 2030, one in five residents is expected to be in that age group.

The town councils want to put in place basic, cost-ef-

fective structures that remove barriers for people who have difficulty walking. This means levelling steps, building ramps and providing railings where needed.

Dr Teo said: "We are not going to do a lot of fanciful structures. It's going to be simple, functional and maintainable."

Even then, there will be difficulties to be dealt with. Dr Teo disclosed that ramps that have to run over areas with underground power cables can be expensive. The cost of diverting electrical services can come up to 70 per cent of the bill.

About 95 per cent of the town councils' project will be funded by grants from the Ministry of National Development's Community Improvement Projects Committee (CIPC), with the rest borne by the town councils.

Opposition town councils do not have access to CIPC funds, which are channelled through citizens consultative committees, which have

PAP leaders as their advisers.

The two opposition town councils, Hougang and Potong Pasir, did not respond by press time when asked if they were doing similar work.

Dr Teo said older blocks will generally get priority. The town councils will also tie in retrofitting work with lift upgrading or cyclical repairs.

Already, new ramps in Bukit Panjang have made it easier for residents like Ms Masgiaton Hussein, 60. The retired cook has difficulty walking after a fall, and lives with her 84-year-old wheelchair-bound mother.

As the lift does not stop on the third floor where she lives, she carries her mother down to the ground floor with the help of relatives when they need to go out.

Lift upgrading on her block will be completed by the third quarter of next year - after which taking her mother out will be a breeze.

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Concrete steps towards mobility

\$32-million masterplan for barrier-free accessibility in over 8,000 HDB blocks

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BY 2011, battling steps and kerbs may become a thing of the past for the elderly and the disabled in constituencies run by 14 town councils when a \$32.4-million, five-year barrier-free accessibility (BFA) masterplan gets underway in April.

And the people heading each of these 14 People's Action Party (PAP) town councils will consult grassroots organisations and residents on their living and travel patterns before drawing up their programmes, co-ordinating chairman Teo Ho Pin told the media yesterday.

Some 8,279 public housing blocks - about 3.08 million residents - will be affected by the masterplan, which includes levelling steps as well as building ramps and railings. About 7 per cent of Singapore's population today is 65 years old and above, a statistic expected to more than double by 2030.

Exactly what share of the budget each town council is getting will depend on the town's size and population profile and needs, explained Dr Teo, who is also



NO SHORTCUTS HERE: Dr Teo and a resident using the walkway ramp in an HDB estate.

the North West District mayor. Priority will be given to those who are elderly or have mobility difficulties.

The Government's Community Improvement Projects Committee will fund 95 per cent of the cost, while the town councils cough up the rest.

Dr Teo said that there are economies of scale when the 14 town councils carry out simultaneous BFA works. Also, they can shorten their learning curves by updating one another on their mistakes and sharing tips, such as building a ramp of concrete because the material - despite its unsightliness - will not become slippery from wear and tear.

The authorities are mindful of how

well-utilised the BFA features built would be, Dr Teo said. Some residents have preferred to find their own shortcuts - such as a dirt track across a plot of empty State land - because they find them the most efficient way to get about, which "may not always be desirable".

A 76-year-old retiree fell and died after taking a shortcut across a one-metre-wide drain at Toh Tuck Road on Jan 30, *The New Paper* reported yesterday.

How to balance convenience with safety? There must be clear concrete links from one building or amenity to the next, and "the parameters must be well thought out and implemented, not left to chance", said Dr Teo.

Ms Judy Wee, vice-president of the Handicaps Welfare Association, hopes that more consultation would lead to better implementation of the Government's BFA plans. "If they want to do it, they need to do it right," she told TODAY.

Examples of poorly built BFA features that she has seen in public housing estates include ramps that are too steep, concave or convex for the wheelchair-bound to use easily and safely.

Prior to the masterplan, 87 pilot projects involving over 1,300 blocks have already been identified, with BFA works - along with lift upgrading - due to be completed in the next three months.

未来五年 8200多座组屋环境将无障碍

邓莉蓉报道

人民行动党治理的14个市镇理事会将在未来五年耗资超过3200万元，为组屋区里的8200多座组屋打造无障碍的居住环境。

社区发展理事会而北区长张角宾博士昨天在记者会上宣布行动党市镇会的五年无障碍通行计划总蓝图，承诺为长年、行动不便及其他居民提供更完善方便

的通行环境。政府将从社区设施改进基金(CIPC Fund) 资助95%费用，其余则来自各别市镇会的营运收入。

反对党选区也能向政府申请资金

其他反对党选区也能向政府申请资金，在组屋区推广无障碍通行计划。但波茨巴西及后港市镇会没有答复本报询问是否有考虑该计划。

张俐俐也是所有行动党市镇会的协调主席。他指出，大部分工

程将在未来三年展开，以在资源有限的情况下让更多居民受惠。国家发展部自去年宣布在全岛组屋区推行无障碍环境后，多个市镇会便积极在各选区内展开无障碍通行计划。

过去半年，82个行动党选区共展开了87个无障碍通行计划，为超过1300座组屋增添更多无障碍设施。超过八成的无障碍通行计划已完成，其余将在接下来三个月内陆续竣工。

张俐俐说：“无障碍通行计划让我们更了解

各别选区居民的需要，他们的活动习惯及所需的设施等，并也征询基层领袖和居民意见，这不仅能帮助我们制定详细的全盘蓝图，也增进居民的归属感。”

较老组屋区将优先

市镇会将根据个别选区的需要决定哪些较老的组屋区将获优先。

工程包括：兴建方便残障人士使用的斜坡走道，提供扶手和座椅让老年人坐着散步，以及在通往停车场、公厕及公厕

等公共设施的道路上梯阶改成斜坡等，让人们一路无阻。裕廊市镇会是最新展开无障碍通行计划的市镇会，其他市镇会如阿尼及惹兰勿刺也已展开无障碍通行计划，拟打造无障碍居住环境。

也是荷兰-武吉让市镇会主席的张俐俐说，市镇会将拨出200元打造无障碍的组屋区，兴建斜坡走道及滑地高等。

他指出，在旧组屋区展开无障碍通行计划比在新组屋区来得难，成本也更高。这

因为组屋周围地下有电缆，因此在施工铺路时特别绕道。

他说：“建斜坡或扶手的费用其实不贵，但为避开地底下电缆的绕道费用就很高，几乎占总费用的70%。在这方面我们同公用事业局合作以应付这个挑战。”

除公用事业局外，市镇会也必须同多个政府部门紧密合作，包括陆路交通管理局、土地

管理局、国家环境局及公园局等，以顺利推行无障碍通行计划。

无障碍设施与环境方便人们通行和使用，也受到居民欢迎。武吉班让居民王叶华(55岁)说，她每天带着14个月大孙子到组屋楼下散步，如果要推着婴儿车上下楼梯很不方便。

她说：“政府兴建更多无障碍设施，今后我们不会走到那里都会很方便。”

小启

为了更详细报道2007年财政预算案的新闻，本报今天将延迟发稿，出版时间可能因此受影响，部分读者明天可能较迟收到报纸，敬请谅解。

人民行动党市镇会五年无障碍通行计划总蓝图

财政年	几座组屋	估计预算(\$)
06/07	1346	372万4000元
07/08	2419	813万9600元
08/09	2093	809万1800元
09/10	1775	961万9600元
10/11	646	282万6800元
总数	8279	3239万7800元