

**WELCOME SPEECH BY DR JOHN KEUNG, CEO OF BCA, AT THE BCA-REDAS BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND PROPERTY PROSPECTS SEMINAR 2014 AT GRAND COPTHORNE WATERFRONT HOTEL ON 9 JANUARY 2014, WEDNESDAY, AT 9.30AM**

Mr Lee Yi Shyan  
Senior Minister of State for Trade & Industry and National Development

Mr Quek See Tiat  
Chairman, BCA

Mr Chia Boon Kuah  
President, REDAS

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

**Introduction**

1. A very happy new year to everyone, and welcome to the BCA-REDAS Built Environment and Property Prospects Seminar.
2. 2014 has just arrived, and I guess that many of you would have made your new year's resolutions for yourselves and your companies. As always, the secret to setting and possibly meeting these goals would be to know what you and your company can do, with some stretching, and what you are going up against in the broader context.
3. And being here today is a good start to gain a deeper insight into the broader context of our industry and to understand the latest market trends and updates of the built environment sector.

**Spotlight on 2013: year in review**

4. However, before we look at the future, let's do a stocktake on what we have achieved in 2013. Allow me to share some of them with you.

**Accolades**

5. In October 2013, we won the International Star (I-Star) award for Singapore's commitment and concrete action to achieve a national target of greening at least 80 per cent of all our buildings by 2030. We are the first country outside of America and Europe to receive this Award, conferred by the US-based energy efficiency coalition, Alliance to Save Energy. This is something we are very proud of.

**The (green) future is now**

6. In future-proofing our built environment, we are constantly looking at ways to mitigate the risks presented by climate change. The Green Building Masterplan has been very successful in providing a framework in leading the industry on its green journey, and as part of the plan, we are also engaging youths – the leaders of the future – through various programmes such as the Greenovate Challenge for schools.
7. On the international front, we continued our efforts to brand Singapore as a global leader in green buildings with special expertise in the tropics and sub-tropics. We organised the Singapore Green Building Week, including key events such as the International Green Building Conference, BEX Asia Exhibition and the World Engineers' Summit, which attracted over 10,000 participants from more than 70 countries in 2013. Last year, the BCA Centre for Sustainable Buildings also announced a new partnership project with the United Nations

Environment Programme (UNEP), which sealed our commitment to assist developing countries in the region to combat climate change. All these stand us in good stead for business opportunities in the region in the years to come.

### **Review of Accessibility Code**

8. Future-proofing our built environment encompasses more than green building and sustainability planning; it also means creating an inclusive society.

As a regulator, BCA has the opportunity and responsibility to implement policies that would help achieve this.

9. In 2013, with the help of the industry, public agencies and voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs), we completed the revised Accessibility Code with new requirements catering to families and more requirements catering to the elderly and persons with disabilities. This will support the national effort in building an inclusive society.

### **Productivity, the way forward**

10. Meanwhile, the national productivity drive was in full swing in 2013. More than 3,000 firms have benefitted from more than half of the \$250 million Construction Productivity and Capability Fund set aside to help firms on their productivity journeys to date. These encouraging numbers indicate that with the government's assistance, more construction firms are taking the decisive step to embark on their productivity journeys.

### **Talent grooming**

11. To support these exciting developments in the built environment sector, highly skilled and talented manpower at all levels would be needed. In 2013, the BCA Academy saw more than 600 students graduating. These graduates, having completed their programmes across the various professions in building and construction, are fully-equipped to take advantage of opportunities in the built environment sector. As a matter of fact, some of them even received job offers before graduation. Going by past experience, we expect that more than 80% of these students will join the built environment sector. Coupled with the few hundred scholarships and sponsorships awarded by BCA and the industry in past years, we hope to build up a strong pipeline of fresh supply of talents to our industry.

### **Gazing into the crystal ball for 2014**

12. Given our achievements over the past year, I guess the question now is, what's next? Going forward, productivity will still remain a key priority, in view of the tighter manpower supply. There's a need to do more with less, hence we'll continue working with everyone in the construction value chain from developers to suppliers to drive greater productivity improvements in the industry.

13. Safety and quality are also at the top of our minds – we will ensure safety while constructing denser and taller buildings, and meet the needs quality-wise of an increasingly affluent and demanding public. Additionally, the push to green existing buildings will continue, while we step up efforts to make existing buildings and infrastructure barrier-free.

### **Conclusion**

14. To conclude, let me acknowledge and thank our long-time co-organiser, REDAS, for hosting this annual Prospects Seminar with us. I also look forward to working even more closely with our partners and stakeholders this year, to make Singapore safer, greener, more productive and inclusive.

The future is bright for the built environment sector. Here's to a great 2014.

Thank you.

- END -