

MEDIA RELEASE

EXPERTS BACK SINGAPORE'S PLANS TO SHAPE A SUSTAINABLE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The International Panel of Experts (IPE) for Sustainability of the Built Environment comprising leading experts in green buildings and environmental sustainability convened in Singapore for the inaugural meeting held at Regent Hotel, a BCA Green Mark Gold^{Plus} Hotel. For two days (29 & 30 September), the IPE engaged in rigorous discussions with BCA and key representatives from the public, the private and the people sectors to review the various initiatives under the Green Building Masterplan.

2 The IPE noted that the initiatives under the 1st Green Building Masterplan formulated in 2006 that placed emphasis on new buildings and those undergoing major retrofitting were successful in creating a 'green wave' in Singapore. The IPE lauded BCA's efforts in taking a strong lead to promote a strong business case for green buildings and drive the industry towards shaping a sustainable built environment in Singapore.

3 The IPE also noted the whole-of-government approach adopted to drive the green building movement and improve the built and natural environment in Singapore, with in-depth involvement of the public, the private and the people sectors. This will contribute to the liveability and sustainability of Singapore.

4 Recognising that the existing building stock in countries around the world consumes the bulk of energy, the IPE strongly recommended the development of

an overall programme that aims specifically at improving the performance of existing buildings with priority on energy efficiency.

5 There was agreement among the IPE that there has to be sufficient actual building energy data to develop useful energy benchmarks for various building types. These building energy data, if made available to the public, would let building owners and managers know how their buildings fare relative to similar property types in terms of energy efficiency. This awareness and access to individualized energy data will enable them to set realistic energy reduction targets for themselves. The IPE recommended that mandating the submission of building energy information in Singapore by building owners should be considered, alongside incentives and other schemes to arrive at the most effective solution.

6 The IPE acknowledged that one of the barriers to upgrading existing buildings is the availability of funds to building owners. IPE advised that while there is a strong business case to green existing buildings, there is also a need for incentives to jump-start the process and motivate building owners to make the effort and financial commitment to retrofit their buildings to achieve significant improvement in building performance, energy efficiency and the health and well being of occupants, tenants and the public at large.

7 IPE Co-Chair Dr John Keung: "In view of the current rapid green building movement experienced in Singapore, we have great potential to be the leader for tropical green building design and management. The Panel's wealth of experience and valuable insights will certainly help Singapore advance towards this vision. When other countries begin to recognise us as the leader in the tropical belt, we can be sure of many exciting business and educational opportunities for companies here."

8 The next IPE meeting will convene in October 2009 to coincide with the International Green Building Conference, which BCA will be holding to launch

Singapore's first Zero Energy Building (ZEB), share outcomes of key research projects and showcase other high profile Green Mark projects.

9 Apart from reviewing Singapore's approach towards shaping a sustainable built environment and various initiatives under the Green Building Master Plan, the IPE will also be sharing their knowledge with the industry through 'Breakfast Talks for CEOs' and 'Leadership in Green Building Lecture Series' held on 2 Oct 08 to create greater acceptance and awareness of green buildings and the need and opportunities for a sustainable built environment.

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Annex 1 – Key Recommendations from IPE

Government Taking the Lead

- By practising green procurement with bulk purchase of green and energy efficient components, economies of scale can be better achieved. This will drive down the cost for the private sector as well.
- The Government can do more by taking the lead in green procurement for their building projects as well as instituting green leasing policies for all government agencies e.g. to rent and lease only Green Mark Goldplus and Platinum new and existing buildings.

International Profiling and Raising Awareness

- Singapore should develop specialized niches, e.g. green building technologies adapted for the tropics through linkages with research institutes globally. We should also share experience in best practices with the region. By doing so, we can establish leadership in this area of work.
- The formation of a Green Building Council, which will enable Singapore to engage in two-way learning opportunities on a global level, should be considered. This will help establish international linkages and benchmark with best practices.
- Encourage the concept of green leases so that tenants are also committed to achieve overall environmental sustainability objectives for the property.

Incentivising the Private Sector

- In other countries, e.g. Japan, banks give out green loans for buildings that aim for higher green ratings, as part of their corporate social responsibility. The financial sector could consider offering preferential loan rates to Green Mark projects of Platinum rating or for upgrading projects of

certain size and type (e.g. non-residential projects above 15,000 square metres in size)

- More incentives for higher-tier Green Mark projects for new buildings (e.g. bonus Gross Floor Area, land sale requirement) are needed to achieve higher savings.
- For existing buildings, private sector will require fiscal encouragement to achieve Green Mark ratings in their upgrading. This will kick start the process.

Development Work in Green Building Technologies

- Create innovation through targeted R&D work, especially to focus on areas that would significantly reduce energy consumption while achieving comfort indicators.
- Create a closer link between innovation and replication such that new technologies could be quickly adapted and applied in the mass market.
- Do more research to quantify the benefits of green buildings beyond energy efficiency e.g. productivity gains, health benefits, etc. so that we can promote holistic benefits of green buildings.
- Continuous improvement of building operation should be recognized. It should be part of any future green building recertification scheme.
- Additional incentives should be considered for exemplary projects that go considerably beyond Green Mark Platinum rating.

Building Industry Capabilities

- Singapore should continue with the current holistic approach in integrating Green Mark assessment into training courses and education programmes, and having a variety of programmes from Master level to professional certified courses, which add breadth and depth to the education approach.

- It is important to focus on capacity building in order for the industry to be equipped with necessary skills to deliver cost effective green buildings and support the green building movement. For example, there is a need to bring in and train facility managers to handle operation and maintenance and improve the performance of green buildings. This will sustain the operation of Green Mark projects after certification.
- Future additions to education programmes could include international practices such as carbon trading and reporting, change management, alternative energy generation solutions, green materials selection, etc.
- Work with professional associations to enhance green training for professionals and institute minimum green training hours as part of their continuous professional development.

Imposing Minimum Standards

- The IPE agreed that legislation will accelerate the green building movement and drive energy efficiency. This will take the form of minimum standards to be followed.
- It is important to measure energy consumption in absolute values rather than just the general energy efficiency gains. This is also consistent with global practices.
- It is recommended that Singapore embark on a long-term strategy to take progressive steps to reduce energy consumption and increase building performance. This process should be transparent to industry so that they can plan accordingly.