

**Opening Remarks by Minister Josephine Teo at the  
Soft Opening of Punggol Regional Library, 30 January 2023**

SMS Janil Puthuchery, MP of Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC

Mr Lee Seow Hiang, Chairman, National Library Board (NLB)

Mr Ng Cher Pong, Chief Executive Officer, NLB

NLB's Esteemed Partners and Volunteers

Colleagues and Friends, Girls and Boys

**Introduction**

1. A very good morning. I am happy to join you today for this soft opening of the Punggol Regional Library. Like many people, I have been eagerly anticipating the launch.
2. Some of you may know that my childhood ambition was to be a librarian. It was thanks to my form teacher in P3, who gave me my first job as class librarian, an assignment that I loved.
3. My love of libraries intensified in university, not least because they are where my ex-boyfriend (now my husband) and I spent endless hours studying together. When one of my daughters started spending lots more time in our Central Library, I wondered who she was “studying” with. To be fair, her results gave me no reason to investigate further.
4. I'm sure many of you have your own library stories. For our family, some of the best memories revolve around taking our excited young children to pick up new books at Bedok Library and reading with them in the evenings till they fell asleep – or we the parents fell asleep!
5. As parents, we felt safe letting our children explore different sections of the library and make new discoveries for themselves. It is why I'm particularly happy that the opening of Punggol Regional Library starts with the first two floors for children. I have no doubt it will bring tremendous joy, learning and discovery for many children and their parents.
6. The Punggol Regional Library is NLB's fourth and latest regional library.
  - a. Spread across five floors, it is also the largest public library in Singapore.





- b. More importantly, it has been designed to be an **inclusive library with a rich collection and services that are designed to be accessible to all.**
7. Why is this important?
8. Because our public libraries are intended to serve all of us and not only some of us. Our public libraries provide opportunities for citizens from all walks of life, regardless of background, wealth or social standing and even physical conditions, to acquire knowledge and achieve self-improvement. In that sense, public libraries in Singapore can be an *Equaliser*, giving every citizen the avenues and pathways to uplift themselves.
9. These aspirations are reflected in NLB's LAB25 (Libraries & Archives Blueprint 2025) launched in 2021. It reaffirms the government's commitment to bring reading and learning opportunities to all our people.
10. When the Punggol Regional Library opens fully in a few months' time, it will bring to life NLB's plan for LAB25. Other than being an *Equaliser*, it will be a *Learning Marketplace*, and will nurture an *Informed Citizenry*, and inspire *Singapore Storytellers*.

**PRL's collections and spaces for children to broaden their learning and discovery about the world, and develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills**

11. The library's many new features and programmes will **serve the needs of the many young families in Punggol**. For example, here, we will find NLB's first dedicated Toy Library - filled with toys and educational aids - to encourage children to learn through play.
12. There is also **Spark!Lab™**, where children can engage in hands-on activities, inspiring them to innovate and create. I am sure these features must be very welcome by SMS Janil as an MP of Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC!

**Patrons with disabilities can enjoy a suite of services and spaces specifically designed and built for them.**

13. As part of NLB's ongoing efforts to engage and support the learning needs of the disability community, the library also has a **range of new and specially designed accessible features and services.**





- a. There is the **Accessible Icon**. This is the purple heart you see on facilities and spaces in the library to indicate that they are prioritised for persons with disabilities to use.
  - b. And, the **new Borrow-N-Go**, a passageway for wheelchair users to borrow books, as the existing borrowing stations may be challenging for some wheelchairs users to take advantage of.
  - c. A new **Accessible Membership** is also being launched today. It gives persons with disabilities added benefits on top of basic library membership privileges, such as a longer borrowing period and free reservation of items.
14. Many of the new accessible features at Punggol Regional Library have been developed following NLB's extensive consultation with many members of the community, including more than 500 persons with disabilities and their caregivers since 2018, as well as the **NLB's Persons With Disabilities Advisory Committee**.
15. I want to thank members of this **Committee**, and everyone for generously sharing your inputs. Your words and deeds are very much in line with the spirit of Forward Singapore.

### **Conclusion**

16. We can look forward to more innovative features and programmes for teens and adults when the library fully opens a few months later.
17. The Punggol Regional Library will play an important part as one of our public libraries islandwide, giving the opportunities and resources for Singaporeans to learn and grow, regardless of our age or starting point in life.
18. Thank you!

