

Resale flats: New checklist

From May, agents must apprise buyers, sellers of HDB policies

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MORE transparency and fewer disputes – these are the twin aims of a new checklist that housing agents will have to go through with buyers and sellers before a HDB resale flat transaction can be completed.

Similar to what insurance agents have to do with their clients before sealing a policy, property agents will have to cover the key items of a resale flat transaction, such as the potential buyer's liability to pay upgrading costs, if any.

The "resale checklist", announced yesterday by the Housing and Development Board and which will take effect from May 1, is to ensure that buyers and sellers are aware of purchase and financing policies.

When asked if the move was to rein in errant agents, the HDB said there has been feedback and suggestions from the public that agents should highlight certain important points to their clients.

"It would also prevent situations whereby the resale transaction has to be cancelled or delayed due to miscommunication and ignorance about policies," said an HDB spokesperson.

Industry players told TODAY

the checklist might deter practices such as under-declaring or over-declaring flat prices so that either buyers or sellers can get cash in hand.

One of the checks is on giving accurate information. The penalties for giving false statements under the HDB Act are highlighted in a bright yellow box, which also lists stiffer penalties – of up to three years in jail – under another law for false statements in a statutory declaration, such as the checklist.

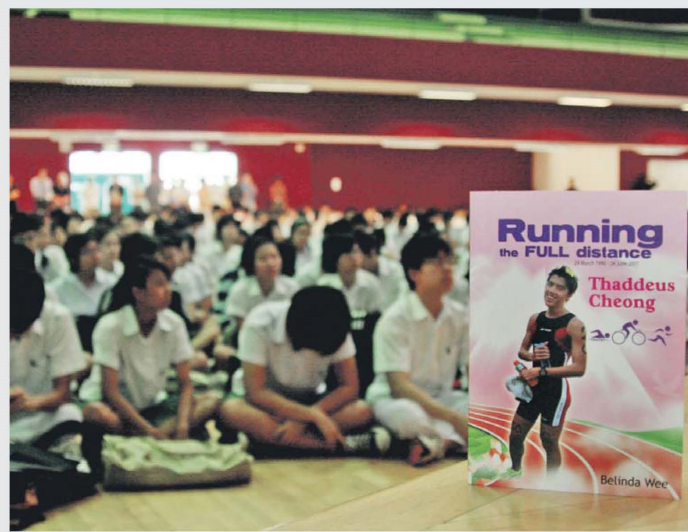
The HDB began preparations for the checklist last September after consultation with industry associations Singapore Accredited Estate Agencies, Singapore Institute of Surveyors and Valuers, and Institute of Estate Agents.

Real estate firms and their agents welcomed the news.

Said property agent Rohana Abdullah, who has encountered many buyers who are unaware of the many HDB rules and regulations: "Now, they will know whatever I do is because of regulation and not because I'm trying to make the deal difficult."

Potential buyers also thought a checklist would be helpful, although some wondered if the additional paperwork would be an effective deterrent for errant practices.

HDB receives about 30,000 applications for resale flats annually and about 92 per cent of the cases engaged housing agents to guide them through the resale process.



GOING THE DISTANCE: Students at Raffles Junior College observing a minute's silence for their former schoolmate and triathlete Thaddeus Cheong, who died last year. He had collapsed at the finish line after completing a trial for last year's SEA Games' triathlon competition.

His aunt, Dr Belinda Wee, has written a book called *Running the Full distance* in memory of him.

ERNEST CHUA

Aesthetics docs unsure if treatments can continue

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THE authorities may have clarified their stance on aesthetic treatments – for the most part, they will leave it to self-regulation by the medical profession – but doctors offering such services are still unsure of where they stand.

Those whom TODAY spoke to said they were confused by media reports that said doctors would be banned from performing 11 aesthetic procedures – a perception the Ministry of Health (MOH) described as "inaccurate" in a circular it sent to doctors yesterday, after issuing a media clarification on Sunday.

Some doctors said they will continue to offer aesthetic services such as microneedling derma-roller; others, out of caution, plan to scale down these treatments.

Aesthetic societies, meanwhile, told TODAY they are preparing to approach the MOH.

The newly-formed Anti-Ageing and Aesthetic Medicine Society of Singapore (AAAMSS) and the Society of Aesthetic Medicine are hoping to engage the MOH with feedback on aesthetic procedures and help to formulate industry guidelines, said Dr Roy Chio, AAAMSS' president-elect.

In its circular, the MOH said under the Singapore Medical Council's guidelines, "a doctor shall not offer to patients management plans or remedies that are not generally accepted by the profession, except in the context of a formal and approved clinical trial".

General practitioner (GP) Teen Yu Ming, however, said the circular was "too vague".

"They should give us clearer directions," he added.

Dr Chio queried what, for instance, was meant by the term "generally accepted" – since even established procedures such as facelifts and liposuction can lead to problems.

"To be fair, aesthetics is not an easy area (to regulate)," he added.

Even as the MOH is working with the Academy of Medicine and the College of Family Physicians to formulate guidelines and standards for aesthetic practices, for now, Dr Teen said he would stop offering mesotherapy treatments at his Jurong clinic but continue with Botox and chemical face peels.

Another GP, Dr Donald Ng, said he will carry on with his main practice in laser treatment but will hold back on offering 11 other treatments, until the MOH stated more directly that such services were not banned.

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