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'Zero energy' building launched

Producing as much energy as it uses, it will be a test-bed for 'green' technologies here SINGAPORE'S first building that can produce as much power as it uses – zero energy, in industry jargon – opened with much fanfare yesterday. The landmark building in Braddell Road employs ground-breaking design features while also harnessing the sun's energy to replenish the energy it uses for air-conditioning and other uses. Its opening is a huge step forward for the local building industry. It will serve as a test-bed for green technology that can later be incorporated in standard construction projects, while students and designers can study first-hand the nuts and bolts of energy efficiency and "green" building. National Development Minister Mah Bow Tan said the opening of the building "marks a key milestone in Singapore's building and construction history". The building was an existing structure that was retrofitted in an \$11 million project in the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) Academy grounds opposite ComfortDelGro. The BCA joined forces with the National University of Singapore, the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore and private sector partners to convert the old three-storey workshop. A massive array of solar panels covering 1,540sqm – bigger than an Olympic-sized swimming pool and the biggest such installation here – was placed on the roof to generate energy to run the lights, office equipment and air-conditioning. The building, which houses offices, classrooms and a resource centre, has been designed to tap on natural ventilation, to reduce the amount of heat transmitted, and to cut down on the amount of power spent on artificial lighting. It marks a brave new world for the construction industry, which will see many of the techniques used as having potential applications for many existing buildings that will be striving to achieve Green Mark certification. This is a benchmarking scheme incorporating global standards in environmental design and performance. The Government hopes to put the Green Mark stamp on at least 80per cent of buildings here by 2030, and has devised a slew of measures, including cash incentives, for building owners to help meet this goal. "Everybody knows that green technology is the next wave ahead," said Mr Steven Choo, chief executive of the Real Estate Developers' Association of Singapore. "We have people and companies working on this green movement, but we should consolidate our position further and evolve relevant green standards for the tropical climate." Mr Mah told the opening ceremony that at least eight out of every 10 buildings in Singapore will be energy efficient and environmentally friendly within 20 years. Property developers gave the thumbs-up to the building, calling it extremely relevant and valuable for the building sector. City Developments spokesman Gerry De Silva said the building's development serves as "a befitting green building model from which the industry can

learn and draw inspiration". This week is also the inaugural Singapore Green Building Week organised by the BCA. It is staging activities to highlight the importance of green buildings. The public can visit the new zero energy building after making an appointment with the BCA. gabrielc@sph.com.sg See Home Page B2

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