Govt will do all it can for kids’ future: Heng

SINGAPOREANS can trust the PAP Government to do all it can to ensure that children have a bright future, Education Minister Heng Swee Keat said last night as he laid out what was being done to address people’s current concerns and create new opportunities.

Addressing the worries of young parents, he said the Government would expand childcare and make it more affordable, and improve kindergarten education.

“We must make it easier for parents to have children and raise children,” he said.

He and Senior Minister of State (Education and Law) Indranee Rajah also spoke of the renewed efforts in schools to nurture character and values, to give children a good foundation for the future.

More financial help will be channelled to children of poor families to ensure every child has a good education, regardless of family income.

Mr Heng also highlighted the range of pathways now available to those who want to further their education, saying “everyone who wants to learn will get an opportunity to do so.”

Two new universities, the Singapore Institute of Technology and SIM University, will mean more students from polytechnics and junior colleges will be able to get their degree locally.

The four office-holders who spoke at last night’s People’s Action Party rally also spoke of concrete steps by the Government over the last 18 months since the 2011 General Election to address key concerns of the public.

Mr Heng gave this assurance: “The Government has heard Singaporeans’ worries of rising property prices. Since 2011, it has built 70,000 HDB flats, the equivalent of 1.5 Ang Mo Kio Catteries. Last week, it introduced stringent measures to further cool the property market.

“We pledge to keep housing affordable,” Mr Heng said.

On public transport, where congestion and breakdowns have been a source of frustration, he asked people to be patient, saying improvements will take time but “we are making steady progress.”

Bus services have been improved and more trains added to existing lines. New lines are being built. Every year, for the next five years, a new section of MRT Line will be opened. The network will be further expanded in the future, such that Singapore will have as long a train track as New York City does, Mr Heng said.

In health care, middle- and lower-income Singaporeans aged above 40 now have greater peace of mind thanks to the “blue card” they carry under the Community Health Assist Scheme. Some 240,000 Singaporeans enjoy subsidies for medical and dental care at general practitioner and dental clinics as a result, including Punggol East residents, he said.

The Government has also addressed cost of living issues for the low-income through a permanent GST Voucher. It tops up the wages of older and less-skilled workers through its Workfare Income Supplement.

He said the Government could not make all these changes alone. “We need your support to carry on this momentum of positive change.”