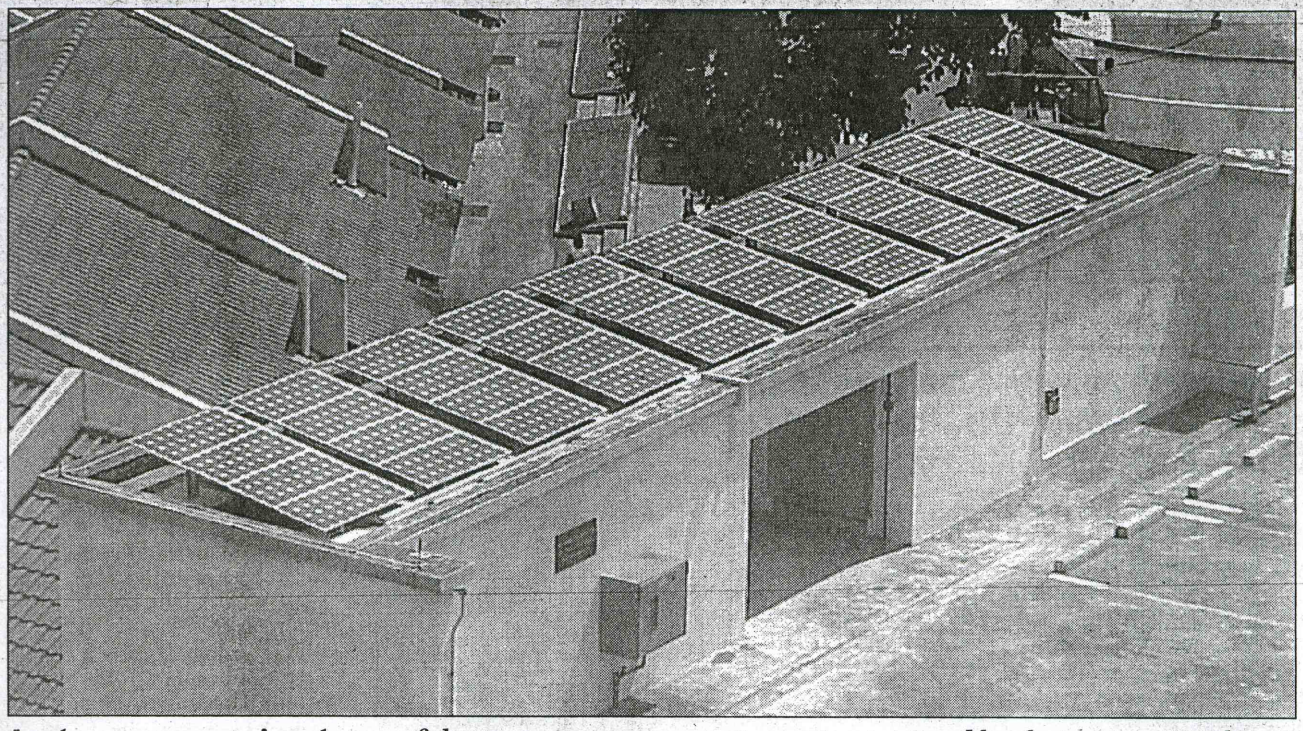

A solar-energy experiment, one of the energy-conservation projects initiated by the town council, uses solar panels on the roof of a multi-storey carpark's storeroom at Block 259A, Bangkit Road.

Solar energy for Sembawang soon?

Sembawang Town Council is experimenting with solar energy, one of several conservation measures

By **PAULINE LEONG**

A MILLION dollars a year — this is what the Sembawang Town Council will save through energy-conservation measures it has launched, besides greener alternatives.

For an environmentally-friendly source, it is experimenting with solar energy.

Currently, harnessing the power of the sun are 10 solar panels, installed at the storeroom roof at the top deck of a multi-storey carpark at Block 259A, Bangkit Road.

This will power 20 lights in the carpark during the day, for increased safety. At night, normal electricity will be used.

Said Dr Teo Ho Pin, chairman of Sembawang Town Council and member of Parliament for Sembawang GRC: "We started studying new initiatives to conserve energy last September."

He told reporters at a press conference yesterday that the town council spends about $11 million on electricity a year — amounting to 22 per cent of the maintenance costs. "There is a need to explore new and alternative energy sources, not only to save costs but also to protect the environment."

Savings on the solar-system project, which has been operating since this February are minimal, said Dr Teo, when compared to other projects it runs.

"But we have to try out other forms of energy which can reduce pollution levels."

The Sembawang Town Council manages about 130,000 flats and 500,000 residents.

One major energy-saver is a voltage dimmer-stabiliser unit to reduce power consumption, to be implemented fully by next year.

The town council estimates savings of about $450,000 per year with this.

Mercury lamps will also be replaced soon by the more environmentally-friendly and energy-saving sodium lamps. The town council intends to replace about 1,600 mercury lamps in multi-storey carparks — saving $50,000 per year.

The use of electronic ballasts for fluorescent tubes has cut power consumption by a quarter, creating cost savings of $573,800 a year.

The moves by the town council are timely, given the release of a Government report on energy efficiency last month.

'There is a need to explore new and alternative energy sources, not only to save costs but also to protect the environment.'

— Dr Teo Ho Pin