

Embargo Until After Delivery

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**SPEECH BY MR TEONG ENG SIONG, MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT
FOR SEMBAWANG AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY OF
6,000 LINES OF TELEPHONE SWITCHING EQUIPMENT AT THE
SEMBAWANG TELEPHONE EXCHANGE ON 30 SEPTEMBER 1977**

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Ladies & Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to commission the 6,000 lines of telephone switching equipment installed at the Sembawang Telephone Exchange.

I understand that this Telephone Exchange was first commissioned in June 1975 with 2,000 lines and was later extended to 4,000 lines in March 1976.

The existing 2-storey Telephone Exchange building can accommodate 30,000 lines of telephone switching equipment and it can be expanded by another 2 floors to accommodate an ultimate capacity of 60,000 lines. It serves mainly the Sembawang and Nee Soon areas and will in future also serve the Nee Soon New Town to be developed by the HDB. This satellite town will have 40,000 housing units when completed around 1990.

Presently there are about 3,400 subscribers connected to the Telephone Exchange. An average of 100 new applications were received a month by Telecoms, an increase of 35% compared to 74 new applications a month last year. About 87% of these applications received are for residential telephones.

With the commissioning of the additional 6,000 lines today, about 80 deferred subscribers waiting for telephone switching equipment will be provided with telephone service while new applicants in the areas served by this Telephone Exchange can expect service upon application except in areas where there is a shortage of telephone lines. Presently there are only 10 deferred subscribers waiting for telephone lines in this exchange area, 7 of whom have been waiting less than 3 months for service and the remaining less than 5 months. They can expect to receive service in early 1978.

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Subscribers served by this Exchange will be able to enjoy the benefits of Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD) and International Direct Dialling (IDD) i.e. they will be able to dial their own trunk and overseas calls without operators' assistance.

Five years ago, hardly anyone staying in the village could obtain telephone service, but today we are very fortunate that Telecoms has made it possible for us to enjoy such efficient telephone service although we are so far away from the heart of the city. Needless to say, the cost of providing such efficient telephone service to outlying areas is quite excessive; land and building alone cost \$2 million, 10,000 lines of telephone switching equipment cost \$2.3 million and the external underground cable plant another \$5 million; a total of \$10 million has been spent so far.

Despite all these achievements, Telecoms, being one of the service-oriented statutory bodies, feels that it has to do more to serve the people of Singapore. For example it intends to make available public telephone service at the off-shore islands at the same rate of 10¢ per call, although it costs Telecoms five times more to provide such service at the off-shore islands.

Telecoms has initially provided 3 public coin-phones at Pulau Tekong Besar, and one at Pulau Ubin, to serve about 6,000 residents in these two major islands.

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Because of the high cost of providing telephone service in the off-shore islands and hence high rental, the demand for telephone service is relatively small. Presently there are only 7 radio telephone lines in Pulau Tekong Besar and 5 in Pulau Ubin. Each of them is charged a total rental of \$2,250 per year, inclusive of the additional charge of \$1,900 for the transmission media equipment.

The feasibility of installing similar public telephones on other islands are being studied by Telecoms.

And now, I am pleased to commission the 6,000 lines of telephone switching equipment in Sembawang Telephone Exchange into service.

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