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Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR GOH CHOK TONG, FIRST DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
AND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE, AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF PASSENGER
SERVICE OF THE SECOND SECTION OF THE MRT SYSTEM AT
ORCHARD STATION ON SATURDAY, 12 DECEMBER 1987 AT 6.30 PM

When I got on the MRT just now, I was pleased to see that the MRT has invited three representative families to come along, the Johari, Wong and Rajammah families. Our MRT is built for Singaporeans like them.

Many people have told me that the MRT fares were lower than expected. They had expected the fares to be higher. Actually, there is no reason why they should be surprised. The Government has paid \$5 billion for the tunnels, the tracks and the stations. These are handed over to the company that will run the MRT system. Passengers won't have to pay for them. They have been paid for. That is why our MRT fares are reasonable and should remain reasonable.

The initial excitement over the opening of the MRT system seems to be over, but I think the full excitement is yet to come. Until today, the trains were only running between Yio Chu Kang and Toa Payoh - six kilometres. But from today, the trains will run to Outram Park - 18 kilometres. Even then, the system is less than one third complete.

Although we have not seen the full benefits of the MRT system yet, today's extension to Outram Park has already brought cheer to the people there.

The shopowners and residents at Outram Park were happy and excited. They organised a carnival to celebrate the arrival of the MRT to their part of town.

I am sure the business people in the Orchard Road area will be happy too. The Orchard Road station is opened at the right time - just before Christmas.

As we stepped off the train at this station, I am sure we were all struck by the gleaming granite floor and the futuristic dome.

This station is simply beautiful.

I must congratulate all of you. You have wrapped your efficiency and service with beauty. You have given us art to admire and appreciate. You have given us Singaporeans more than a transport system. Those who said that technocrats are pre-occupied only with cold efficiency could not have been more wrong.

Our stations are warm and friendly, not just functional places to get on and off trains. The architecture, the art pieces, the entire MRT system, make for a more gracious city.

They add a touch of class to our lives.

Singaporeans are happy with the MRT. We see their excited faces as they rush to inspect the stations and to try out the trains. To those who plan and build it, I am sure that is reward enough.

May I wish all of you a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year and many pleasant trips on the MRT.