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**SPEECH BY DR RICHARD HU, MINISTER FOR FINANCE,
AT THE GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY OF THE NEW IRD
BUILDING AT THE JUNCTION OF THOMSON ROAD/NEWTON
ROAD ON SATURDAY, 18 JANUARY 1992 AT 10.30 AM**

It gives me great pleasure to officiate at the ground-breaking ceremony of the new IRD Building. The new building shall be known as "Revenue House".

Revenue House is sited and designed to provide greater convenience and higher standards of comfort to taxpayers. When completed in 1995, this "intelligent" building will bring together the various divisions of IRD, presently scattered in 4 locations, namely, Fullerton Building, Albert Complex, Colombo Court and International Plaza. Taxpayers will be able to seek assistance on all tax matters and pay their income tax, property tax, estate duties and stamp duties in this "one-stop" centre. The taxpayer service areas in the new building will be spacious and comfortable.

Improving service to taxpayers also requires investment in both technology and people. IRD will be spending more than \$100 million in the next 5 years in new computerisation projects, which will further automate work processes, increase efficiency, and improve service. IRD is presently doing a major review of all its computer systems and work procedures.

These projects will benefit the public. Members of the public now can have on-line electronic access to the Valuation List for information on Property Tax. Also, taxpayers who wish

to enquire about their income tax position will be able to do so, later in the year, through telephone using the Voice Response System. Access to the System will be by personal passwords to ensure confidentiality.

But to meet taxpayers' expectations of good service, IRD also requires good, well-trained officers. IRD needs a share of the best managers and tax professionals to provide leadership in improving its operating efficiency.

As announced recently, IRD will be converted into a statutory board. As a statutory board, IRD will be better able to attract and retain good officers by offering competitive wages and more flexible reward systems. A tax administration with motivated and well-trained staff will mean greater efficiency and better taxpayer service.

Better taxpayer service should be reciprocated, on the part of taxpayers, with greater voluntary compliance with the laws. IRD will continue to simplify its procedures to help taxpayers comply, and improve its assistance and enquiry services. Paying taxes is a fundamental duty of every citizen.

The relationship between IRD and taxpayers need not be an adversarial one. On the contrary, the relationship can be a positive and professional one, based on trust and confidence. The challenge is for IRD to develop such a relationship with taxpayers. Centralising IRD operations in one building and improving taxpayer services is a major step towards this goal.

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