

- 5 AUG 1992

Release No. : 21/JUL
03-1/92/07/14

92 - MBT - 11

**SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE
GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY FOR THE WOODLANDS MRT PROJECT ON JULY 14,
1992 AT 10 AM**

The first groundbreaking ceremony of our MRT system was held in 1983. The mood then was one of cautious optimism. We had never built or operated an MRT system before. Would the benefits of having the system justify the huge capital investment? Would we be able to complete the system on schedule and within budget?

2 We now have the answers to these questions. The MRT system was completed on schedule and within budget. It has enabled Singaporeans to travel further and faster in airconditioned comfort. It has enhanced the value of flats in areas served by the MRT, and improved businesses in shops situated near the stations. The MRT is now very much a part of Singaporean life.

3 Today we come to this groundbreaking ceremony with very different expectations and feelings from that first ceremony. We ask instead, where and when will the next MRT line be built?

4 We have indeed come a long way since the days when the idea of an MRT was first mooted. Looking back at the four years of MRT operation, I have no doubt that all who use the MRT would agree with me that our decision to build it was a right one. I am equally sure that our decision to proceed with the Woodlands Extension will also be a right one.

5 The MRT today is a major and indispensable pillar of our public transport. A good public transport is essential in helping us keep our roads free-flowing. A single double-decker bus, transporting up to 100 passengers, takes up road space equivalent to that of 3 cars. The 3 cars, on the other hand, can at most transport 12 persons, usually less. The MRT does better. It carries over 1,000 passengers at any one time without taking up any road space. What these figures tell us is that the most sensible way to transport people without causing the congestion so common in many other cities must be by MRT and buses.

6 With growing affluence, more Singaporeans will want to own cars. Unless they find public transport an acceptable and attractive alternative to the car, even more will want to own cars. True, as a status symbol, the MRT or bus is no match for the car. However, as a mode of transport, there is no reason why MRT and buses cannot come close to the car in reliability, convenience, and comfort. The challenge to the public transport operators is to strive to improve their service to the level where Singaporeans know that the only reason why they own a car

is simply because of the enhanced status that they enjoy with a car. This way they can help dampen the demand for cars.

7 The Mass Rapid Transit Corporation (MRTC) has an important role to play in the overall public transport system. You are responsible for the hardware of the system. Before commuters get to use the train service, their first impression will be of the station. Therefore the stations must look impressive. People must find it user-friendly, aesthetically beautiful, and easily accessible. The trains must be engineered to the highest specifications, bringing maximum comfort to commuters, and minimum intrusion to the environment, in terms of noise and other pollution.

8 I am sure all residents of Woodlands are looking forward to the day when the trains start running through here. I remember how excited Singaporeans were on the first day when our MRT started operating between Yio Chu Kang and Toa Payoh in November 1987. I am certain the sentiments will be the same for residents in Woodlands four years from now.

9 In the meantime, residents will have to bear with the noise, disruptions, and detours when construction work begins. In the execution of a project as large as this, inconveniences will be inevitable. This is where grassroots and community leaders will be able to help. MRTC needs your assistance to explain to the residents who are affected by the construction work. On its part, MRTC will have to anticipate problems and resolve them to the best of its ability.

10 I am glad the Corporation has already made efforts to reach out to those affected by site clearance works. The Corporation is prepared to adjust schedules to reduce disruptions to businesses. A good example is the award of the contract to carve out this rock-embedded slope in front of us. This has been awarded six months ahead of the original schedule to accommodate the opening of a new electronics factory nearby early next year. Otherwise, the blasting operation associated with rock-removal would have jeopardised the delicate manufacturing operation of the new factory. Such sensitivity will go a long way in getting the fullest support from the people who are affected by the construction.

11 On this note, I would like to wish the Chairman of MRTC, BG Wesley D'Aranjo, his management, staff and all who are involved in the project every success.

Cc: INFORMATION5 (8812:GVT224)
From: INFORMATION5 (8812:GVT224)
Subject: [Woodlands MRT Project Groundbreaking Ceremony]
Delivered: Fri 17-July-92 11:55 SING (56 lines)

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASES

DISTRIBUTION LIST

| | | |
|-----|--|---------|
| 1 | Mr Yatiman Bin Yusof, Parliamentary Secretary (Foreign Affairs) | GVT 047 |
| 2 | Mr Lim Boon Heng, Senior Minister of State (MTI) | GVT 090 |
| 3 | Dr Yeo Ning Hong, Minister for Defence | GVT 200 |
| 4 | Mr Ch'ng Jit Koon, Senior Minister of State (Community Development) | GVT 234 |
| 5 | Dr Ahmad Mattar, Minister for Environment | GVT 080 |
| 6 | BG George Yeo, Second Minister for Foreign Affairs | GVT 049 |
| 7 | Mr Harun A Ghani, Political Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs | GVT 710 |
| 8 | Library Officer, Auditor-General Office | GVT 370 |
| 9 | Library. Ministry of Education | GVT 036 |
| 10 | Mr Lee Chiong Giam, Chief Executive Director (PA) | GVT 615 |
| 10a | Mr Soon Low Boon, Library (PA) | |
| 11 | Library, Parliament House | GVT 251 |
| 12 | National Archives | GVT 237 |
| 13 | Mr Aziz Champion, Ministry of Law (PS's copy) | GVT 125 |
| 14 | Budget Division, Ministry of Finance | GVT 052 |
| 15 | Mrs Elaine Swinn-Tan, Head, Public Relations, MOL | GVT 168 |
| 16 | Economics Dept, MAS | GVT 721 |
| 17 | PSD, Ministry of Finance | GVT 111 |
| 18 | The General Manager, Board of Commissioners of Currency | GVT 611 |
| 19 | Library, Ministry of Community Development | GVT 235 |
| 20 | Commissioner for Lands, Land Office, Ministry of Law | GVT 463 |

| | | |
|-----|--|--------------------|
| 21 | Library, Jurong Town Corporation | GVT 390 |
| 22 | Public Relations Dept, Ministry of Home Affairs | GVT 137 |
| 23 | Resource Centre, Ministry of Trade & Industry | GVT 091 |
| 24 | Public Relations Dept, VITB | GVT 480 |
| 25 | Registry Supervisor, Ministry of National Development | GVT 240 |
| 26 | The Chairman, Singapore Institute of Standards and Industrial Research | GVT 325 |
| 27 | Librarian, NTUC Research Unit | GVT 351 |
| 27a | PA to Mr Ong Teng Cheong, Deputy Prime Minister | |
| 28 | Mindef Library | GVT 207 |
| 29 | Director, Community Relations Dept, Ministry of Community Development (Kindly make copies and distribute to all the secretariats) | GVT 470 |
| 30 | Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Defence | GVT 560 |
| 31 | Dr Lee Boon Yang, Minister for Labour & Second Minister for Defence | GVT 205 |
| 32 | Dr Tay Eng Soon, Senior Minister of State for Education | GVT 030 |
| 33 | Mr Wong Kan Seng, Minister for Foreign Affairs | GVT 044 |
| 33a | Mr Peter Ho, DS (SEA) Min. of Foreign Affairs | GVT 044 |
| 34 | Dr Richard Hu, Minister for Finance | GVT 017 |
| 35 | Mr Yeo Cheow Tong, Minister for Health & Minister for Community Development | GVT 172 GVT 230 |
| 36 | Mr Sidek Bin Saniff, Minister of State for Education | GVT 680 |
| 37 | Mr J. A. Nathan, Globalink, TDB | GVT 817 |