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SPEECH BY MR ONG TENG CHEONG, ACTING MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE OPENING OF "WATER IS PRECIOUS" EXHIBITION ON SATURDAY, 19 JUNE 1976 AT 7.30 P.M. AT KIM KEAT COMMUNITY CENTRE, SINGAPORE

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation has sounded a grim warning of a serious water shortage in the world in about 30 years' time when the world's population will have doubled and the demand for water tripled. She also pointed out that around 75% of the urban population of the less industrialised countries live without a supply of drinking water, while the remaining 25% is often supplied with unsafe or even polluted water.

2 We in Singapore should be grateful that we are able to get fresh drinking water of high quality at the turn of the tap. Water comes to us so easily that we have taken it for granted.

3 The consumption of water is steadily increasing from year to year from 136,000 cubic metres per day in 1950 to 585,000 cubic metres per day in 1975. Projections have revealed that the demand for water will rise to 745,000 cubic metres per day by 1978, and it will surpass 850,000 cubic metres per day by 1980.

4 Fresh drinking water is not only precious because it is something we cannot do without in our daily lives, but it is also costly to produce. Much capital expenditure is involved in continuously expanding the entire water supply system in Singapore to meet the ever increasing demand for water; we need more reservoirs, more treatment plants, more pumps and more distribution mains to cater for the increasing number of consumers. All these investments in plants and equipments with their consequent depreciation cost over the years, and loans for construction of new reservoirs have to be repaid with interests.

5 Over \$293 million were spent on new water projects and extensions to the supply and distribution networks during the last ten years (1965 - 1975). In 1975 alone, some \$28 million had been spent - of which nearly 35% was spent to double the impounding capacity of the Kranji-Pandan and Upper Peirce reservoirs. The estimated total cost of these two schemes is over \$137 million - nearly one-third of which will be financed by external loans.

6 In the next five years (1976 - 1980), development expenditure will take up another \$236 million. This tremendous increase in development outlay will inevitably be reflected in the rising cost of water in the years ahead.

7 In 1950, the cost of water was about 50 cents per 1,000 gallons or 13 cents per cubic metre. For a long time, in fact, all domestic or household water had been heavily subsidised. In 1974, the cost of water was about 25 cents per cubic metre. In 1975, it increased to 28 cents per cubic metre. This year it is estimated to exceed 30 cents per cubic metre.

8 The major consumers of water in the Republic are obviously the domestic consumers and the commercial/industrial consumers. Domestic consumers account for about 46% of total water consumption in Singapore while commercial/industrial consumers use about another 31%. The remaining water consumption is mainly taken up by Government action agencies and the Armed Forces.

9 What do all these mean to the individual? A running tap discharges more than 2 gallons or 10 litres of fresh drinking water per minute. You may be surprised to know that if a tap is allowed to run for only five minutes, about ten to fifteen gallons (45 - 68 litres) of good water go to waste. A person uses about 25 gallons or 115 litres of water per day for drinking, cooking, washing, bathing, etc. In many households, however, the daily consumption

far exceeds this amount per person per day. This means that there are people still wasting water away unnecessarily.

10 We cannot afford to waste water. We have to encourage people to have good habits in the use of water and avoid habits such as cleaning or washing under a running tap. There are many other examples of good habits to be learnt from this "Water is Precious" exhibition. The exhibition is aimed at the inculcation of water saving habits and to show how wasteful we can be if we do not use water in the proper way. We must always remember that water is precious and each of us must do his part in our national effort to save water.

11 I would like to congratulate the Management Committee members of this Community Centre, Kim Keat Citizens' Consultative Committee members and the members of the Organising Committee including those from the Public Utilities Board for their efforts in making this exhibition a success. I now have great pleasure in declaring the exhibition open.