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**SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS  
AND INFORMATION AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE,  
AT THE TOPPING OUT CEREMONY AT THE TOA PAYOH  
MRT STATION ON 5 AUGUST 1985 AT 10.00 AM**

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I am happy to be here this morning to join you in celebrating yet another milestone in the progress of our MRT. Today we are here to witness the pouring of the final bucket of concrete on Toa Payoh Station - our first station where the major civil works have been completed.

It seems like only yesterday that we had our groundbreaking ceremony for this MRT project at Shan Road, just a few kilometres from here. That was almost two years ago. Today's simple ceremony marks a critical point in the construction of the MRT, a point somewhat like home owners receiving the key to their flat from the HDB. But it is just the shell of the flat that is completed. From there on a lot more work has to be done to convert the shell into a home - pleasant and livable. The floor has to be tiled, the walls painted or wall papered. Kitchen equipment has to be fitted, an air conditioner installed, windows grilled and furniture moved in. It is only after all these that the flat is ready for occupation.

Of course, furnishing a MRT station is much more complicated and takes much longer than furnishing a flat. Over the next two years, complex electrical and mechanical works need to be done to the station. These include the ventilation and air conditioning systems, ticketing machines, elevators, computers, power supplies, electronic sensors and safety devices. Only after these complex systems are in place and fully tested, will the station be ready to

receive the first train. Of course, the interior decoration, greenery and aesthetics of this station will not be forgotten, to make sure that the station will be pleasing to passengers. Other stations beginning with Novena in just a few weeks' time, will follow in quick succession as the pace quickens.

For the Toa Payoh Station, about half a million man hours have been expended to bring the station to this stage. At one point work went round-the-clock for more than two months. That effort was required to meet the tight schedule which the MRTC works to.

The dusty, noisy pit excavated just 16 months ago has been transformed into a finished structure which promises to be an attractive, comfortable station. Architectural finishes will add further colour and character to the station.

For the convenience of residents, the station will be linked by pedestrian subway to the opposite side of Lorong 2, and by footpath to the bus interchange, making for greater ease and safety.

As I have said before, Toa Payoh residents deserve credit for our early successful construction programme here. They took the disruptions, inconvenience, noise, and dust all in their stride. In due course they will have two MRT stations in their midst, giving them fast, safe, and congestion free travel to other parts of Singapore.

Residents will be happy to know that this ceremony also marks the phasing down of disruptions and inconveniences for them. Things will gradually return to normal. The station will be recovered by earth, and only the semi-circular entrance will remain visible. But work underground will continue.

Our overall achievement in the MRT construction programme so far has been made possible by the wholehearted support and cooperation of Singaporeans living near the various construction sites, the hard work and dedication of staff and workers of the MRTC and the various contractors and subcontractors.

Overall, the entire MRT project is progressing well. It is meeting our expectations. The overall picture is positive. This is not to say that problems do not exist. Of course there are unexpected obstacles in an undertaking as large and complex as MRT. But the MRTC and its contractors have always resolved them expeditiously. The Corporation's schedule allows for some variation, some flexibility. This is always necessary when so many different contractors and suppliers are involved, and so many different construction processes are proceeding simultaneously.

Our task this morning is to pour the final bucket of concrete onto the roof of this station. This final bucket to the 20,000 cubic metres of concrete already poured signals to all Singaporeans that the MRT is on track, and will be coming their way very soon.

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