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**SPEECH BY DR WAN SOON BEE, MINISTER OF STATE
(PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE), AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF
THE ENTRANCE PLAZA AT THE SINGAPORE ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS
ON SATURDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 1985 AT 9.30 AM**

I am pleased and honoured to be here today to open this truly impressive Entrance Plaza. The landscaping and architecture of the Entrance Plaza enhance the Zoo's enviable reputation as the finest in Asia and one of the most beautiful in the world.

In a highly urbanised society like ours we need natural recreational areas where people can pause and reflect on life and nature.

A country is judged not only by its economic performance or productivity increases but also by the way in which its people spend their leisure time.

In the past four years, the number of visitors to the Zoo has shown an encouraging increase which reached 896,000 last year.

This clearly shows that more and more Singaporeans are finding the time for recreational pursuits.

This is very encouraging as places like the Singapore Zoological Gardens help Singaporeans to get away from the maddening pace and tensions of city life.

The Zoo offers such relief and leisure. More important, the Zoo offers something for all members of a family and this is essential for strengthening family ties as it allows families to spend a whole day together.

Our Zoo is reputed to be among the best in the world. With its imaginative landscaping and design it provides a unique experience for the visitors of an example of what can be done to present animals in a way which inspires humans about the wonder of nature.

And for city-dwelling Singaporeans this experience is even more welcome and educational.

This is why the NTUC has found its annual family gatherings at the Zoo during our May Day celebrations a great favourite.

I would like to urge more and more Singaporeans and their families to enjoy this opportunity for a peaceful and educational time of relaxation at our pleasant and beautiful Zoo.

The Zoo is offering a 15 per cent discount to all union members of NTUC affiliates. This is most welcome and an additional benefit for the welfare of our workers and their families.

I hope the union members will take full advantage of this as the Zoo contributes to developing well-balanced individuals when they realise animals and plants are part of our very existence.

The Zoo as a top attraction with Singaporeans will naturally be a tourist attraction too.

The management and staff of the Zoo should maintain and improve upon its excellent standards and continue to attract more of our residents to the Zoo. Any spot that becomes a popular attraction among residents will also naturally become a top tourist attraction.

This should be the guiding principle of all those who are interested in developing tourist attractions in Singapore.

Mindful of this, I hope to see the Zoo achieve a one million-visitor target very soon and make our Zoo the top favourite both among Singaporeans and overseas visitors alike.

The Zoo's popularity can be attributed to its policy of introducing new exhibits on a regular basis and to undertake major renovations to improve visitor comfort.

This Entrance Plaza is a fine example. More car park space, extra ticket booths, covered walk-ways, a covered tram terminus and an enlarged souvenir shop have all been designed to provide the visitors with a first-class social, recreational and educational amenity.

I compliment the Zoo on its innovativeness and wish you all success.

It is my pleasure now to declare this Entrance Plaza open.

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