

tt19991106a

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460
Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 4.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Speech BY Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister For Defence, at
the Official Launch of the Bukit Panjang LRT System to be held on 6 November 1999 AT
10.00 AM

National Archives of Singapore

LINKING COMMUNITIES

Three years ago, I officiated at the groundbreaking ceremony for Singapore's first Light Rapid Transit, or LRT system, which will serve the residents of Bukit Panjang, Chua Chu Kang and Yew Tee constituencies. I am delighted to be back here today to witness the completion of this LRT system and to officially launch it. The launching of the Bukit Panjang LRT system marks a major milestone in Singapore's drive to achieve a world class land transport system.

Genesis of LRT

The idea to adopt the LRT system in Singapore was first conceived some four years ago. In February 1995, a government delegation led by Mr Mah Bow Tan, then-Minister for Communications, and Dr Tan Cheng Bock, then Chairman of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Communications, went on a study mission to visit some of the best rail systems in the world. The delegation saw the LRT system as a possible transport mode for some of the HDB towns in Singapore. Lighter and cheaper than MRT systems, the LRT offers a practical alternative for lighter traffic corridors.

When the Land Transport Authority or LTA was formed in September 95, one of its first major undertakings was to plan and build the first LRT system in Singapore. The 1996 White Paper on Land Transport set out the strategies and plans of the new Authority to meet the challenge of building a world class land transport system in Singapore. The promise to Singaporeans was a bold one – to deliver a world class land transport system within the next 10 to 15 years.

To meet this challenge, one of LTA's most immediate tasks was to start expanding the rapid transit network. A good rapid transit network is essential to promote fast and easy travel in a compact city like Singapore.

It is also environmentally friendly. A comprehensive, rail-based public transport infrastructure is thus a cornerstone of LTA's strategy to provide an efficient land transport system.

World Class Transport System – Expanding RTS Network

The decision to build the first LRT system in Bukit Panjang was announced by Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on 10 February 1996, on the occasion of the opening of the Woodlands Line. This was followed in March 1996 with the announcement to proceed with the North East MRT line. In November 1996, DPM Lee announced the extension of the existing East-West MRT line to Changi Airport. During the same year, it was also announced that two LRT systems will be planned as an integrated part of the new towns of Sengkang and Punggol. These two LRT systems will be connected to the North East line and from there to the entire MRT network, seamlessly connecting the two towns to the other parts of the island.

All these new lines will be ready over the next few years - the Changi Airport Line in 2001, the North East Line in 2002, the Sengkang LRT, also in 2002, and the Punggol LRT in 2004. With the completion of these projects, the Rapid Transit System (RTS) network will increase by more than 60% to about 140 km by the year 2004.

Community Consultation – “Gotong Royong”

tt19991106a

As a pilot project, the Bukit Panjang (BP) LRT system has brought about much excitement. There has been close consultation with grassroots leaders and residents along the way; and valuable feedback has been received on various features of the system. This includes the names of the stations, the choice of the colour of the trains, and architectural designs like the shape of the station roofs. There was a public exhibition on the system in Raffles City and in Bukit Panjang Community Club in 1996 before construction began. The community has indeed played an important constructive role in the project and a large part of today's successful completion must be credited to their interest and co-operation.

Throughout the three-year construction period, LTA officers were frequently in touch with the grassroots leaders and residents to help them cope with the inevitable construction dust, noise and night work. I commend the LTA officers for forging a proactive and consultative partnership with the people they serve, and for going out of their way to understand and meet the needs of their customers - the residents of Bukit Panjang, Choa Chu Kang and Yew Tee towns. I congratulate all of you for this strong community spirit of "gotong royong".

I am confident that the SLRT (Singapore LRT Pte Ltd) will manage and operate the first LRT system in Singapore, with this same spirit of "gotong royong". I am happy to be informed that the SLRT intends to work closely with grassroots leaders who will be frequent travellers of the system and will channel useful feedback to SLRT. SLRT must strive for continuous improvement to provide excellent customer service standards all the time. Let us make the LRT as much an integral part of the Singapore transport landscape as the MRT has become.

Linking Communities

The theme of today's event "Linking Communities" is particularly apt. The LRT system will not only link the residents of Bukit Panjang, Choa Chu Kang and Yew Tee towns to one another, but it will also link them to the rest of Singapore, by seamless connection to the MRT and the bus system.

Breaking of New Ground

National Archives of Singapore

In many ways, the BP LRT system has brought a number of firsts to the community here. Firstly, the system will be run as a fully-automated operation, following the trend in the rapid transit industry throughout the world. In this respect, passengers will be very important sources of feedback to allow the operator to make improvements to the system and service levels.

Another first is that the integration of the depot of the BP LRT system with a commercial building, the Ten Mile Junction. This building comprises two storeys of retail shops, restaurants, a supermarket and a foodcourt. There is also a LRT station in this building and there are plans to have residential development on top of the Ten Mile Junction in the future. These residents will be able to shop, live and travel, all under one roof. Their homes will only be an elevator ride away from the air-conditioned comfort of our rapid transport system, which will connect them to the rest of Singapore.

Integrated Transport Infrastructure

Further down the road, there will be more challenging and exciting opportunities to integrate transport infrastructure with town planning to allow more efficient land use and to develop better links to enhance the accessibility and convenience of public transport. LTA should continue to be bold and imaginative in its approach to building up a comprehensive integrated transport network that will be fast, reliable and comfortable.

Conclusion

Today, I want to congratulate the consortium of Daimler Chrysler Rail Systems, Keppel Engineering Ltd and Gammon Pte Ltd. for successfully completing Singapore's first LRT project. Residents of Bukit Panjang, Chua Chu Kang and Yew Tee Constituencies will be able to benefit from the new LRT services from today - which indeed marks a new chapter in Singapore's land transport history. On this note, I declare the Bukit Panjang Light Rapid Transit system open.

Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore