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**SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER, MR GOH CHOK TONG,**  
**AT THE OPENING OF THE SUNGEI BULOH NATURE PARK**  
**AT THE VISITOR CENTRE, SUNGEI BULOH NATURE PARK**  
**ON MONDAY, 6 DECEMBER 1993 AT 4.30 PM**

I visited Sungei Buloh four years ago, when it was slated to be developed as a bird sanctuary. I have then asked: “Will the development and the bulldozers drive away the birds for good? Will the migratory birds return to roost?” The officers from Parks and Recreation Department (PRD) assured me that they would take all precautions to minimise disturbances to the birds’ migratory routes. Sungei Buloh would retain its natural environment and charm.

From what I can see, Sungei Buloh’s sprawling terrain remains intact, almost in its entirety. Apart from the bird hides, this Visitor Centre and the surrounding structures are the only buildings around. They are unobtrusive. They have not spoilt the rich natural habitats of mature mangrove swamps, mud flats, fresh water marsh, and grassland. Far from scaring away the birds, I am

told that the type of birds sighted in Sungei Buloh have actually increased, from 126 in 1990, at the start of the project, to the present 141. Eighty per cent of these 141 species are migratory. Some of them fly all the way from Siberia during their cold winter months to 'vacation' here. We are pleased that they have chosen Singapore.

Many may be surprised that in urban Singapore, we still have such natural habitats. It was not an easy decision to set aside 87 hectares of land as a nature park in land-scarce Singapore. The land was actually zoned for an agro-technology park. It would have been a profitable economic venture. Instead, we decided to turn it over to the birds.

The Sungei Buloh Nature Park is one of the 19 nature areas conserved under the Singapore Green Plan Action Programme. These sites provide a variety of natural habitats, ranging from primary and secondary forests to mangrove swamps and marshlands.

It is one of the largest projects that the government has undertaken at nature conservation. Much as we would like to conserve all our natural heritage, it is impossible to do so. Conservation has to take into account the competing housing and economic demands on our limited land resource.

Despite this, we have set aside five per cent of our land for nature conservation. In absolute terms, this works out to just over 3,000 ha. Or about four-and-a-half Ang Mo Kio New Towns. The five per cent allotted to nature conservation is almost a 50 per cent increase over the nature reserves now under protection. Considering that we have a very high population density of about 4,400 persons per square kilometre, this is a big commitment to nature conservation.

We have adopted a two-pronged strategy to manage our nature areas. The first is to safeguard the designated nature areas. This has been done by incorporating the 19 nature areas in the Concept Plan which maps out Singapore's development strategy. The Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA), as the Government's planning authority, will delineate the exact area and boundary of these 19 nature areas in the Development Guide Plans. In addition, URA will monitor development adjacent to these nature areas to ensure that they

do not adversely affect the ecological balance or the natural environment of the area.

The second part of our strategy on nature conservation is to manage the designated nature areas effectively. The National Parks Board has been appointed as the Scientific Authority on Nature Conservation. As the scientific authority, it will advise the government on any development proposals and management policies of the designated nature areas. It will also monitor and coordinate all measures needed to maintain the health of the designated nature areas.

Nature conservation does not mean leaving nature alone. Wherever possible, nature areas should be put to complementary use so that Singaporeans can enjoy our natural heritage and learn to appreciate nature. Sungei Buloh

Nature Park will be used extensively for research and education and special student and teacher programmes have been prepared. I would like to encourage our children to visit the Park with their teachers and learn more about our flora and fauna. Watching birds in their natural environment is a totally different and enriching experience from seeing birds in captivity.

Many organisations have worked together with the Parks and Recreation Department to develop the Sungei Buloh Nature Park. I congratulate PRD, Jurong Bird Park and all other parties involved, for successfully completing the project. Jurong Bird Park has been appointed as the managing agent for the Sungei Buloh Nature Park because of its expertise on birds and their habitats.

I am sure that Singaporeans, young and old, will find their visit to Sungei Buloh Nature Park a novel, stimulating and rewarding experience.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Sungei Buloh Nature Park open.

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