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SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE NIGHT SAFARI
ON THURSDAY, 26 MAY 1994 AT 7.15 PM

In 1987, Dr Ong Swee Law invited me to tour the Singapore Zoo at night. Under illumination and in the stillness of the night, the Zoo took on a new air of mystery and the unexpected. I was mesmerized by the atmosphere and suggested that the Zoo should conduct night tours on a permanent basis, offering some kind of a Night Safari.

They responded that the idea of a separate zoo for nocturnal animals was already being worked on. The night tours were merely experiments to test the market. We were, in fact, guinea pigs.

I was therefore delighted to preview the finished product some weeks ago. It was indeed an unique experience. And I am happy to be back for a repeat performance.

Tonight, I open the Night Safari with a warm feeling of pride. This is the only one of its kind in the world. The beauty of it is that such a facility should first appear in heavily urban and densely populated Singapore!

The Night Safari is our latest example of what imagination and resourcefulness can achieve. We do not have the tropical forests of Africa. We do not have generous grounds for animals to roam. We do not even have enough road space to satisfy Singaporeans' desire for cars. Yet Dr Ong Swee Law and his team are able to dream up and create this large animal kingdom for Singaporeans and their foreign guests.

What they have done is an extension of how we have systematically built up Singapore - our public housing, our industries, our airport, our country. The growth of Singapore is based on resourcefulness. With resourcefulness, we are able to break out of our confines of limited land area. Three million people work and live on 600 square kilometres of land, six million tourists a year, yet we do not feel squeezed or claustrophobic. The Botanic Gardens, the Bird Park, the Zoo, the Sungei Buloh Bird Sanctuary, the Night Safari, the Underwater World in Sentosa - these rich flora and fauna give us space and the feeling of living in a big

country. Indeed, no country can beat us in the ease and convenience of coming into contact with such a rich variety of trees, birds, fishes and animals.

The Night Safari is an excellent example of what keeps Singapore going: the willingness to think big, the boldness to seize opportunity, the readiness of Government to back up a good idea.

By setting aside these 40 hectares of land and investing over \$60 million in this venture, the Government has given Singaporeans another park to stretch their legs and enjoy nature. A night's outing watching animals in their natural habitat will be therapeutic and relaxing for our hard-working urban population. It is a richer experience than watching TV.

On this occasion, I am also pleased to announce the gift of two rare Asiatic lions to our zoo by the Government of India. There is only a small number of Asiatic lions in the wild and Singapore is grateful for this valuable addition to its Zoo.

I congratulate Dr Ong and his management team for giving us one of the best zoos in the world. The Night Safari is an outstanding achievement. I feel confident that it will get better and better with time and public support.

For those of you who are about to see the Night Safari for the first time, I can tell you that it will be a magical experience. But walk softly, listen to the rustle of leaves and watch out for that tiger stalking you.

I am pleased to declare the Night Safari open.

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