SPEECH BY MR LIM HNG KIANG,
ACTING MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND
SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
AT THE OPENING OF THE EXHIBITION, "175 YEARS OF SINGAPORE"
AT TAKASHIMAYA SQUARE BASEMENT LEVEL 2 ATRIUM
ON SATURDAY, 30 JULY 1994 AT 8.00 PM

The subject of money has fascinated mankind for generations. It has inspired many theories, and many quotable quotes. When coins were first introduced as a common unit of exchange, the value was in the weight of the coins. People were therefore concerned that the weight was accurate to make sure the coins were not adulterated, debased or shortchanged. It was however inconvenient to weigh the coins each time you have a transaction. You need trust and confidence. That required time to build. But the confidence can dissipate very quickly. Hence the saying "Bad money chase away good".

Over the years people accept money as such because they know that others will also. Convention has dictated so and their experience has proven it. Coins were replaced by currency notes. It was no longer the value by weight but the value by what it can be exchanged for. To put it another way, a currency's strength is a barometer of the faith and confidence its people and the international community have in a country's economy. The healthier the economy, the stronger a country's currency. The stronger the currency, the higher the standard of living for its citizens.

Our Singapore dollar has appreciated over the years. It is now enjoying a healthy exchange rate with most of the major international currencies. Many countries do not mind being paid in Singapore dollars because they are confident that its value will not fall overnight. This is the confidence that gives value to money.
What happens when that confidence disappears? Money, after all, is only a piece of paper, very much like any other piece of paper, with no intrinsic value of its own. History shows that some currencies once held in high regard, can become useless, literally overnight. We have had one example right here in Singapore. I am talking about the Japanese "banana" money, which became useless at the end of World War II. When that confidence disappears, then the currency become no more than pieces of paper. When that happens, people seek substitutes as a medium of exchange. Whether it is gold, jewellery or even cigarettes, or they simply resort to barter.

So you can see, the old saying "Bad money chase away good" is as relevant today as in the days of gold coins. To continue to have a strong Singapore dollar, we need to maintain the confidence in our currency, in our economy, in our leadership.

This exhibition offers us a different perspective of money. In this exhibition, we will be able to see a variety of the different forms of currency that has been in use in Singapore. Also on display are rare artifacts, stamps and pictures. All have been put together with the aim of giving Singaporeans a glimpse of the last 175 years of Singapore's history. By putting these coins and currency together, we are able to trace an uninterrupted 175 years of Singapore's history.

I would like to congratulate the Singapore Mint and the National Museum for organising this exhibition. I hope that many of our young, especially the students, will take this opportunity to visit the exhibition. I am sure that they will find it a most educational and rewarding experience. This exhibition will serve to remind Singaporeans of our humble beginning, the spirit and determination of our forefathers and leaders in making Singapore what she is today. It will certainly be an eye-opener for many of Singapore young who grew up in an affluent society and have not tasted poverty. This exhibition will help them to understand
that the comfort and security we enjoy today did not come about easily. It came through much sacrifice and nation building efforts of past generations coupled with vision and foresight of our leaders.

It is now my pleasure to declare the exhibition, "175 Years of Singapore", open.