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**SPEECH BY MR LIM HNG KIANG,
MINISTER FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT,
AT THE GROUND-BREAKING CEREMONY
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF A WATER ABSTRACTION POND
AT THE SLE/BKE INTERCHANGE
AT KRANJI ON MONDAY, 5 AUGUST 1996 AT 11.30 AM**

I am pleased to be here this morning for the ground-breaking ceremony for the construction of a water abstraction pond, and the Seletar/Bukit Timah Expressway Interchange.

This is a very significant project for Singapore. It represents our continual efforts to find innovative solutions to our limited land and water supply.

There are competing demands on our limited land. A major consumer of land is infrastructure development which is critical to our economic development. A lot of land is needed to build roads, office and commercial buildings, factories, and power and water installations. Roads alone take up 11 per cent of our total land space. We also need land for schools, as well as recreational amenities such as parks, and nature reserves.

As our land resources are small, there is a limit to the amount of land that we can set aside as water catchment areas. If we designate more land for water

catchment, there will be less land for housing and other developments. The reverse is also true.

We have been able to overcome to some extent our land and water constraints through various measures. The key strategy is to optimise and maximise the use of our land and water resources. Our water conservation programme to encourage Singaporeans to use water wisely is the cornerstone of our efforts to make the best use of our water resource.

Similarly, we optimise and maximise our land use. We complement this key approach with other measures such as land reclamation. We have effectively increased our land size from 587 sq km in 1967 to 641 sq km today through land reclamation. We continue to reclaim more land from the sea. However, this source of land supply is also finite. We have also moderated the demand for land to some extent by switching to high value-added and high-tech industries, which use less land.

Our policy of optimising land use has enabled us to meet the competing land use demands. That is why, despite the high demand on our limited land for economic and industrial development, the Government is still able to provide Singaporeans with recreational amenities such as parks, gardens, nature reserves and even golf courses. Through effective land use, we can further develop Singapore into a City of Excellence, which can accommodate four million people in a high-quality living and working environment.

To achieve our goal, we must continue to find innovative solutions to our land and water constraints. There will be greater demands on these two resources as we develop further. The construction of this water abstraction pond

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and the Seletar/Bukit Timah Expressway Interchange is one such innovative solution. Let me elaborate.

We are building this huge water abstraction pond, which will collect storm water for use, under the interchange. This has never been done before. So far, the land beneath all our interchanges had been used for growing shrubs and plants to beautify our island.

The pond and the pumping station will take up land about twice the size of a football field. The pond has an average depth of 13 metres, or about the height of four HDB flats. It has a storage capacity of about 84,000 cubic metres of water. This will be the largest reinforced concrete pond ever built to collect storm water, which will be pumped into the Upper Seletar Reservoir.

Our engineers have designed a special canal with a water-intake system at the bottom of it to collect the storm water and channel it into the pond. This is an effective engineering solution to increase the collection of storm water in an urbanised setting like Singapore. On a normal day, the canal serves as a normal drainage channel.

The building of the pond under the interchange underscores our strategic approach of optimising and maximising land use. This innovative engineering feat will achieve three important objectives.

i One, it maximises the use of our valuable land by making it possible to build the pond within the road reserve under the interchange.

ii Two, it creates a 1.8-hectare pond that will add to our water supply.

iii Three, it frees 1.8 hectares of land for other developments.

A part of this project is the Seletar/Bukit Timah Expressway Interchange. It involves the construction of 16 piers and three elevated roadways. These piers will have a maximum height of 28 metres - as high as the Benjamin Sheares' Bridge. The interchange is scheduled to be completed in about two years.

I commend our engineers and designers from the Public Works Department, the Land Transport Authority and the Public Utilities Board on this piece of innovative engineering work. This demonstrates the effectiveness of a coordinated and integrated approach by various government agencies to land use in land-scarce Singapore.

I wish our three government agencies every success in the construction of this important project, and look forward to seeing more of such innovative solutions in the future.

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