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Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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SPEECH BY BRIG-GEN (RES) LEE HSIEN LOONG, MINISTER
FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
(SERVICES), AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE FUJI HAWK CENTRE,
JURONG BIRDPARK ON SATURDAY, 16 JANUARY 1988 AT 4.00 PM

The Bird Park is one of the unique attractions of Singapore. With the opening of the Fuji Hawk Centre today, the original masterplan of the Bird Park has at last been fulfilled, as it was conceived by Dr Goh Keng Swee many years ago.

When Dr Goh officially opened the Bird Park in 1971, he made its purpose abundantly clear. The Bird Park would not make our society more rugged. It would have a negligible effect on the productivity of our workers. It was unlikely to tighten national cohesion, or raise the cultural or educational standards of the population. However, it would add to the enjoyment of our citizens, especially our children. Therefore, although it was unlikely to become a highly profitable project, it was a fully justifiable one.

This justification has gained strength with the passage of time and the progress of our nation. Our standards of living have risen. Singaporeans are now more affluent. It is now more important than ever for us to make Singapore not only a place where we can earn a good living, but also one which is pleasant, interesting and stimulating to live in. Otherwise, no matter how high our GNP may be, our people will still feel dissatisfied, bored and probably disgruntled.

Most of the time when Ministers make speeches, we exhort Singaporeans to work harder and produce more. So much so that an early draft of my speech today called earnestly upon the Bird Park itself to upgrade its standards and strive for excellence. Indeed, the Bird Park should do this anyway. But from time to time let us also think of ways to have a good time in Singapore.

Singaporeans are not ascetic, austere people. We are not puritannical in outlook, believing that if something is enjoyable it must be wrong and probably is sinful. Fortunately we work hard, but we also want fun in our lives. This can be seen from the large numbers of Singaporeans who travel overseas - last year alone, we made more than 3.5 million overseas trips. This is more trips than there are Singaporeans, surely one of the highest proportions in the world. A few would have travelled on business, but the vast majority went as tourists on holidays. When I was in New Zealand two years ago, I met Singaporeans wherever I went: not retired old couples who have saved up for a lifetime for a trip, but young working men and women, many still in their twenties, taking a break from work.

There is nothing wrong with that. Singaporeans have both the income and the leisure, and we seek outlets. Overseas travel should not be our only such outlet. We may not be able to duplicate in Singapore the ski-slopes of Europe or the natural scenery of New Zealand, but we should, on our little island, create recreational spots where we can relax and enjoy ourselves.

This is why the Government has put much emphasis on recreational projects - the zoo, parks, beaches, offshore islands, Sentosa, or the Bird Park. We are spending nearly a billion dollars under the Tourism Development Masterplan

to develop the infrastructure for such projects. This is not just to attract tourists to Singapore, but also to provide for the needs of Singaporeans. I invite Singaporeans to produce bold, imaginative ideas for making Singapore fun to live in. If the ideas are good, we will implement them.

The Bird Park was such an unlikely but successful project. In densely built-up Singapore, we cannot easily afford the land for extensive bird-sanctuaries. But in the Bird Park we can relax with our friends and families, far away from the hustle and bustle of the city. Here, we can be close to nature and admire and enjoy the wonders of birdlife.

The Fuji Hawk Centre is a milestone in the annals of the Bird Park. It will also add something to Singapore's amenities and attractions. In 1971, after Dr Goh had unsuccessfully asked Britain to help us set up a falconry centre, he expressed the hope that help could perhaps be found "in some quiet corner of the world, in some last refuge of reaction and obscurantism, where people still happily engage in falconry without let or hindrance from tiresome moralisers." Singapore does not have the good fortune to live in a quiet corner of the world, nor is it a refuge of reaction and obscurantism, but happily we now have a falconry centre. And for that we must thank Dr Goh.

It is now my pleasure to declare open the Fuji Hawk Centre.