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PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR LEE YIOK SENG, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT) AT THE OPENING OF THE ROAD SAFETY EXHIBITION AT THE PEOPLE'S PARK COMPLEX ON SATURDAY, 11 SEP 82 AT 7.30 PM

When I was invited by the Traffic Police to open this Road Safety Exhibition, I asked for supportive data on traffic accidents in Singapore. As I worked on the statistics, I became concerned and then alarmed by the traffic accident figures.

Firstly, traffic accidents seem to have become a daily occurrence. In 1981, 273 people lost their lives on the roads, whilst 1,259 were seriously injured. Therefore an average of four serious or fatal accidents occurred everyday of the year. In the first half of this year, despite strenuous efforts by the Traffic Police to patrol our roads, there were still 156 fatal accidents and 548 cases of serious injuries or an average of 3.8 victims a day.

Secondly, the number of traffic accidents involving motor-cyclists, scooterists and their pillion riders have increased at an alarming rate. In 1981, 58% or 38 per cent of fatal and serious accidents were accounted for by this group of road users. The proportion rose to 44 per cent in the first half of 1982, accounting for 61 fatalities and 244 serious injuries.

Thirdly, many of the fatal or serious accidents involving motor-cyclists, scooterists and pillion riders are found in the younger age group of 15 to 44 years. In 1981, 65% or 23 per cent of this group of road users who lost their lives were healthy people between the ages of 15 and 44. For the period January to June 82, 49 persons or 31 per cent of the fatalities were from this group of road users.

To promote/2.

To promote road safety for the pedestrians and motorists, various programmes have been implemented at considerable costs by the Government. Firstly, we started with signalling key traffic junctions, replacing the traffic circus with micro-processor controlled traffic lights. The signalisation programme of traffic circuses started with the Guillemard Circus in 1965. This programme was largely completed in 1982 when Bird Park Circus was signalised. So far, \$12 million have been spent. Secondly, we have extended the signalisation programme to cover small road intersections to install a set of traffic lights for each road junction in the city and our HDB estates. As of today, 508 traffic lights have been installed at a cost of \$15 million. Thirdly, we have introduced computer technology to control and link all the traffic lights within the city area with the implementation of the Area Traffic Control (ATC) system in 1981 at a cost of \$6½ million. Finally, we have launched a programme to build pedestrian bridges and underpasses. Within a span of two-and-a-half years, we have built 89 pedestrian bridges across the major roads and expressways around the island. 14 pedestrian underpasses have also been constructed. The bridges and underpasses have cost the Government \$32 million. Supplementing all these facilities are ancillary facilities like zebra crossings, speed regulatory strips, road humps and the provision of traffic lay-bys at all our new expressways. All these measures are aimed at facilitating vehicular and pedestrian movements while at the same time making our road safe for them.

If we had not invested heavily in the various infrastructures to enhance vehicular and pedestrian safety, I am quite sure the traffic accident figures would have been worse. The fact that traffic accidents still occur frequently despite the various efforts, indicates simply that many motorists and pedestrians do not want to comply with the traffic rules and regulations when they use the roads. If there had been more safety consciousness amongst our road users, many traffic accidents could have been avoided. To help instil safety consciousness, the Traffic Police have been holding regular road safety exhibitions.

In addition, plans are being drawn up to launch a project to ensure that every motorist/scooterist is thoroughly and properly trained before he is allowed on to the public roads. It is intended that this scheme would come into operation in 1984/85.

Meanwhile, I/3.

Meanwhile, I would like to urge all motor-cyclists and scooterists to exercise more care and caution on the road. They should comply with road signs and signals, keep well within the speed limit, take account of the weather conditions and refrain from weaving in and out of traffic lanes. By trying to save a few minutes, they run the risk of losing their limbs or even their lives. Motorists, on the other hand, should give motor-cyclists/scooterists due regard and give them the right of way at every opportunity. If all road users can co-operate and be courteous on the road, I have no doubt that we will have greater success in curbing traffic accidents, thus avoiding serious injuries and unnecessary loss of lives.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Road Safety Exhibition open.
