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**SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN
MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS
AT THE SENGKANG LRT EXHIBITION
AT Ngee Ann City
ON 7 DECEMBER 1996 AT 10.00 AM**

It gives me great pleasure to open the Sengkang LRT exhibition. You will find in this exhibition many exciting new ideas for urban dwellings -- ideas which will become reality when the Sengkang LRT system is completed in 2002.

1996 has been an especially significant year for public transport development, particularly for rail transport.

In January, we announced the decision to build the 20-km and \$5bn North East MRT Line (NEL). When completed in 2002, this will totally transform life for residents in the North East of Singapore.

In February, the Prime Minister opened the 16-km Woodlands Extension for revenue service. The first major extension of the MRT system since 1990, it benefits many commuters, particularly those travelling along the North-West corridor.

In April, we awarded the contract to build the first Light Rapid Transit (LRT) system in Singapore. The 8-km Bukit Panjang LRT is due to complete in 1999.

Then at the National Day Rally this year, the Prime Minister announced the plans for Punggol 21 where the new town would incorporate a LRT system.

In September, DPM Dr Tony Tan announced that we will build a LRT in Sengkang.

Three weeks ago, DPM Lee Hsien Loong announced the decision to extend the MRT to Changi Airport. When all these projects are completed, Singapore will have more than 130 km of rail network, double the entire MRT network in 1990.

Today, we will be looking at the plans for a 10-km LRT system for the Sengkang Town. The Sengkang LRT will be the first in several aspects:

- (a) It will be the first transit system integrated with the planning and development of the town;
- (b) It will be the first transit system to run directly into the neighbourhoods, bringing superior public transport services to the door-steps of residents; and
- (c) It will be first rapid transit system to have its stations integrated with the facilities at the neighbourhood centres.

The Sengkang LRT project is an exciting one for planners as well as commuters. It has allowed planners from the Housing Development Board (HDB), the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the Land Transport Authority (LTA) to share ideas and pool their years of experience gathered from various fields of speciality. Since this is a brand new town, there are no physical constraints posed by existing roads and buildings. The planners have been able to design transport infrastructure for Sengkang Town in a way that makes best use of land and provides maximum convenience for the residents.

In the White Paper on Land Transport, the Government has spelt out its plans to make public transport better. What you see here is an example of what is possible. The LRT plus the North-East MRT line will provide an affordable and attractive public transport alternative to cars for the 74,000 households in Sengkang.

In a few years time, a Sengkang resident can hop onto the LRT at a station near his apartment and connect directly and easily to the North East MRT Line. He will be able to travel to Orchard Road in under 35 minutes, almost the same time as by car, but without the hassle of driving or looking for a parking spot.

At the Town Centre, he will have a comprehensive range of public transport facilities. The bus interchange will be less than 20 metres away from the MRT/LRT stations. Taxi stands, car drop-off and pick-up points will be within easy walking distance.

All these public transport facilities will be linked to shops and other major facilities located in the podium block which will be integrated with the MRT and LRT stations. Those who live or work at the Town Centre will enjoy easy and direct access to public transport.

The same concept of integrated development will also be extended for the first time to neighbourhood centres. Two neighbourhood centres on the west loop of the Sengkang LRT will have the LRT stations integrated with shops and other facilities. Residents returning home from a hard day's work can shop or eat at these neighbourhood centres before making their way home along the covered walkways to the residential blocks.

To shorten the walking distance, the LRT will run directly into the neighbourhoods at these two locations. The layout and orientation of the buildings have been planned to minimise any visual intrusion and noise of the LRT. Further, careful landscaping will preserve privacy even as we provide better accessibility and greater comfort.

The new features adopted in the Sengkang LRT project will be refined and applied to other new towns in future. This exhibition offers a glimpse of what the future can be.

The Sengkang LRT is another example of how LRT fits in to the overall public transport system. It will better link individuals, families and communities in Sengkang with those in other parts of Singapore. In so doing, it will not only enhance our quality of life, but also bring us closer together as a community.

It now gives me great pleasure to declare open the Sengkang LRT Exhibition.
