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**SPEECH BY MR WONG KAN SENG,
MINISTER FOR HOME AFFAIRS,
AT THE FOUNDATION STONE LAYING CEREMONY
FOR TUAS CHECKPOINT
ON WEDNESDAY, 15 MAY 1996 AT 10.30 AM**

I am happy to be here this morning to lay the Foundation Stone of this new Tuas Checkpoint.

The close links between Singapore and Malaysia have been in place for many decades. The Causeway, the first land link between Singapore and West Malaysia, was officially opened in June 1924. At the time immigration control was imposed in flow between the two countries in July 1967, the average number of people coming across the Causeway daily was about 17,300.

Traffic between our two countries has been increasing. Today, some 100,000 people cross the Causeway daily in either direction, six times more than in 1967. Also, many families have relatives on both sides of the Causeway. During holidays and festivals, the cross-border travel is so heavy that people exchange views about which time of day is the best time to attempt the crossing - some favour crossing before dawn; others prefer after midnight! In addition to people, the Causeway also sees a heavy flow of trade vehicles transporting produce, raw materials and components in both direction. This has strained facilities at both ends and caused huge traffic build-up during peak hours. Given

our growing economies and the increasing integration of the regional economies, we can expect the volume of cross-border traffic to grow further.

The Singapore Government warmly welcomes the deepening of links between our two countries. Singapore has been a strong supporter of the Indonesian-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle, which is a win-win concept of cross-border cooperation between Johor, the Riau Province of Indonesia and Singapore. The strengthening of economic linkages with Malaysia, particularly with the neighbouring state of Johor, is to our mutual benefit. This will reinforce the historically deep cultural ties between the peoples of our two countries.

This is why the Singapore Government strongly supports the Second Crossing project, where a bridge will link Tanjung Kupang in Johor to Tuas in Singapore. The Tuas Checkpoint to provide CIQ facilities on our side of the Causeway is part of that commitment. The completion of our new Tuas checkpoint will be in 1997, to tie in with the completion of the Second Crossing bridge. This will provide a good alternative, especially for trade vehicles carrying industrial goods and produce intended for our industries or our port as the crossing is more conveniently located in terms of access to the North-South highway and Singapore's industrial sector and port. The Second Crossing is expected to initially divert about 30 per cent of the traffic from the Woodlands Causeway. This should be a great help to easing the congestion at Woodlands and central Johor Bahru.

Today's ceremony to lay the Foundation Stone to mark the beginning of construction of the Tuas Checkpoint is therefore an important milestone for us. The investment in making travelling between Singapore and Malaysia smoother, faster and more convenient is visible proof of the Singapore Government's

commitment to increasing ties between our two countries. As with the first causeway, this new gateway will enable cross-border flow to grow. It is an important investment in our future.

Tuas Checkpoint is being built on nearly 20 ha of reclaimed land. It is estimated to cost over \$400 million and when fully completed, it will have the capacity to handle about 240,000 people daily to and fro, a volume which has been projected for Tuas Checkpoint for year 2010. This increased capacity will enable Tuas to support the growth of trade, tourism and other areas of co-operation between the two countries.

The Tuas Checkpoint will feature a unique two-deck system with cars and motorcycles being channelled smoothly from the bridge onto the upper deck while buses and goods vehicles will descend from the bridge to the lower deck. This design was proposed in view of the height of the Second Crossing bridge which is 12 metres above ground at the point where it enters the site.

Clearance will be smoother and faster than what is experienced at the existing Woodlands Checkpoint today. I am sure that this is something that all who travel to and fro between the two countries will welcome and have eagerly waited for. The implementation of automated clearance, which is currently being tried out on a pilot basis at the existing Woodlands Checkpoint will also be extended to the new Tuas Checkpoint to facilitate the clearance of frequent travellers. This involves giving frequent travellers a smart card which would allow them to get through the checkpoints much faster.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all parties in this important project to keep up their good work to ensure that the new checkpoint will be completed

in tandem with the opening of the Second Crossing Bridge which is targeted to be ready by end 1997. I would like to thank the team of capable professionals from the Public Works Department, whose vision, design effort and closely co-ordinated activities will see an important landmark being established to foster the close ties that we already have with our neighbours. I would like to thank the Malaysian authorities handling customs, immigration, transport, infrastructure development and security for your cooperation in ensuring smooth operations of the Second Crossing on its opening. The presence of officials from the Malaysian Immigration and Customs today is a demonstration of your strong support which we greatly appreciate.

We all look forward to the day when the new checkpoint is opened and an alternative gateway is in place to facilitate land travel between Malaysia and Singapore.

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