

19 AUG 1989

Singapore Government

# PRESS RELEASE

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89-404-16

Release No.: 08/AUG

03-1/89/08/03

ADDRESS BY DR YEO NING HONG,  
MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION AND  
SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE (POLICY),  
AT THE KIM SENG NATIONAL DAY DINNER  
AT KIM SENG COMMUNITY CENTRE, 570 HAVELOCK ROAD  
ON THURSDAY, 3 AUGUST 1989 AT 8.00 PM

Since our last National Day, our economy has done well. Incomes for Singaporeans have gone up. The year end bonus has been restored. In many cases, it has even been increased. Some companies and employers have also given additional mid-year bonuses this year.

For Singapore to continue to be successful, we need careful, systematic, far-sighted, long-term planning in every aspect of our nation's life, - e.g. in the management of our economy, our political stability, our defence, our social relationship and our transportation.

We managed our land transportation in the same way as we managed our port, our airport and our telecommunications. We anticipate problems and resolve them before they give rise to undesirable consequences. This approach has served us well. Pricing roads correctly has helped us maintain free flow of traffic. This means less time wasted on the road for all Singaporeans. As a bonus, the revenue generated has also come in useful in helping the Government pay for the building of HDB estates and other infrastructure in Singapore. Without the revenue contributed by road tax, ARF, petrol duty and other charges, we would have been less able to afford the five billion dollars needed to build our MRT. Indeed, the Government was not able to proceed with the project earlier, because in the 70's, we were not sure if Singapore could afford such a huge sum of money. Our reserves then were meagre. Fortunately, our economy

continued to grow. So too, our reserves. Otherwise, like so many other countries, we would still be talking about how good an MRT system would be.

Younger Singaporeans may not know that our MRT studies began as early as the 1960's. We debated them thoroughly in the 1970s. Do we really need the MRT? Will it be cost effective? Do we have enough money to pay for its construction? Can Singaporeans afford the fares needed to cover operating cost? In 1982, we decided the answer to these questions was Yes, Yes, Yes and Yes. We proceeded with the construction. It was one of the fastest in the world, from ground-breaking in 1983 to the running of the trains for public service in 1987, four years later.

Progress with Phase 2 has been equally satisfactory. Since the end of July, test trains have been running along the eastern line. In the coming months, more technical trials will be carried out, to check all safety aspects of the system. If all goes well, I expect the line from Marina Bay via Raffles Place and City Hall, all the way to Tanah Merah, to be opened for public service on 18 November 1989. This section includes stations at Bugis, Lavender, Kallang, Aljunied, Paya Lebar, Eunos, Kembangan and Bedok. This means that residents in the eastern part of Singapore will enjoy the benefits of the MRT.

With the opening of the eastern line, residents in Tanah Merah will take about 19 minutes to go to Raffles Place. To go to Orchard Road, it would take them 23 minutes. A trip to Chinese Garden to bring the family for a Sunday outing would take only 44 minutes.

The rest of the stations in Phase 2B are also progressing well. We expect that they will be available for public service next year. We shall give a more definitive update when plans for their opening are finalised.

In conclusion, let me wish all Singaporeans another peaceful and prosperous year.

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