

**SPEECH BY MR LEE HSIEN LOONG, PRIME MINISTER, AT THE OFFICIAL
OPENING OF KALLANG - PAYA LEBAR EXPRESSWAY PHASE 2, 19
SEPTEMBER 2008, 7.30 PM**

1. I am happy to be here today for the opening of Phase 2 of the Kallang - Paya Lebar Expressway (KPE). The entire 12-km long KPE is now complete.

2. The KPE is a significant addition to Singapore's road network. It provides residents in northeast Singapore faster and more direct access to the city centre. It also offers many motorists who currently use the Central Expressway (CTE) an alternative route for their daily commute. This will ease pressure on the CTE, and indirectly benefit many motorists who live in the northern part of the island, such as Ang Mo Kio and Yishun.

3. We have invested billions of dollars to build roads over the years, and will continue doing so. This KPE costs \$1.7 billion. After the KPE, we will be building the Marina Coastal Expressway (MCE), to be completed by 2013. The MCE will replace the ECP at Marina Bay to provide a high speed link between the ECP and the AYE. It will be joined to the KPE so that residents from the northeast can also get access to western Singapore. We will also be building the North South Expressway (NSE), to be completed by 2020, which will provide an additional route for residents from the north to reach city areas. These two expressways – the MCE and NSE – will together cost well over \$10 billion.

4. On top of this, we will spend another \$3 billion over the next 5 years on smaller projects: road widening and extensions to relieve local bottlenecks. Examples include a new vehicular bridge over Sungei Serangoon, to provide motorists travelling from Sengkang and Punggol New Towns direct access to the KPE; an extension of Bartley Road to Tampines Avenue 10; and widening of the Pan-Island Expressway (PIE) from Bukit Timah Expressway (BKE) to Adam Road.

5. The Government will expand our road network as the vehicle population grows. But it is impossible to keep building roads at the same rate indefinitely. Fundamentally, we have only a limited amount of land in Singapore. Roads already take up 12% of our total land area. We need land for many other uses, such as homes, factories, offices, parks and recreation facilities, reservoirs and water-catchment areas – uses which make our economy vibrant and our living environment attractive. Further—more, along key arterial roads and in the city centre, it is difficult to widen roads even if we want to.

6. We can build some roads underground, like the KPE, but there is also a limit, because tunnels are very expensive. Compared to a surface road, an underground road typically costs 10 times more to build and 30 times more to maintain. Furthermore, ultimately underground roads have to emerge above ground somewhere, and access roads take up quite a lot of space. Therefore,

we can only build underground roads where it makes sense economically, and where it also fits in with our urban planning and development.

7. In the last ten years, the LTA added 8% more lane-kilometres to our road network. But the vehicle population grew faster still, growing 25% over the same period. Today, we have a vehicle population of 880,000. If it continues to grow at 3% a year, as it has been doing in recent years, we will never be able to build enough roads to keep up. So we have no choice but to apply a judicious combination of both vehicle ownership and usage measures, to keep our traffic free-flowing.

8. We cannot do this solely by limiting the number of cars in Singapore, through the COE scheme. Traffic is increasing not only because there are more cars. Another reason is that each car is making more trips. Consequently, we need Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) to manage the desire to drive, especially during peak periods and in the city centre. ERP ensures that road users take into account the costs of congestion when they choose to drive. Without the ERP, our roads would be choked, and even the buses would not be able to ply freely.

9. I know it hurts motorists to pay each time they pass an ERP gantry, but there is no easy solution to managing traffic congestion. Cities all over the world face this problem – whether it is New York, London, Moscow, Beijing or Bangkok. When cities ignore or fail to tackle congestion, residents face gridlock, and have no choice but to sit in a traffic jam twice a day, morning and evening, and sometimes even all day. The cost in time and inconvenience to workers and to the economy is enormous. We cannot afford to let this happen in Singapore. Hence we have to implement the COE and ERP schemes, unpopular though they may be. They complement our efforts to build more roads and enhance our bus and train services, to keep traffic flowing and the city humming.

10. The completion of the KPE is an impressive engineering feat. It involved building the tunnel underneath developed towns, and under a river and canal. I commend the LTA and its partners in the construction industry for their hard work over many years, which has paid off today. I also thank residents and community stakeholders along the route who have patiently endured the noise and inconvenience from the construction works, and continued to give their full support to the project.

11. I am happy to declare Phase 2 of the Kallang-Paya Lebar Expressway open.