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**SPEECH BY THE PRIME MINISTER, MY GOH CHOK TONG, AT
THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE SINGAPORE CHANGI AIRPORT
TERMINAL 2, ON SATURDAY, 1 JUNE 1991 AT 11.00 AM**

In 1981, Changi Airport opened with one runway, and one terminal building. Three years later, a second runway was added. Today, we are celebrating the official opening of the second terminal. This brings the airport's total passenger handling capacity to 2 million a year. Changi Airport has become a major global air hub. 53 airlines link Singapore directly to 110 cities. The growth of Changi Airport over a short period of 10 years is remarkable.

How did we achieve this?
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The answer lies in our national pursuit of “excellence” not just at the individual level but also as a team. When each of us does his job to the best of his ability, it may not seem much. But if everyone does his best and works together as a team, much can be achieved.

This is the story behind Changi Airport. For the Airport to succeed as a major air junction, it has to be special not only in terms of the airport infrastructure, but also in terms of service quality. This means dedication, tapping ideas from staff and superior teamwork.

For the construction of the airport infrastructure, the PWD assembled a team of bright young architects and engineers. I was told that they sat down with the airport managers, supervisors and workers from Paya Lebar for several brainstorming sessions. The architects and engineers had no experience in designing an airport and they enthusiastically culled ideas from those who worked in the old airport. They studied every idea. Some ideas seemed trivial at first. But when looked at closely, it became clearer how important they were to the user friendliness and smooth running of the whole airport complex.

I was given many examples of the valuable contributions made by airport staff. Let me give you two of them.

At many airports around the world, immigration clearance is conducted by an officer seated inside an enclosed booth. He looks authoritarian, unfriendly and suspicious of passengers. This immediately makes the passengers apprehensive and feel uncomfortable. Someone suggested that immigration

clearance should be made more friendly. The result is the open counters which you see now at Changi Airport. No longer does the Immigration Officer look so intimidating. He is now seen to be approachable and friendly.

Another useful idea came from a staff controlling the taxi queues. At Paya Lebar, the taxi queues moved slowly. He suggested the use of angular lots rather than the usual straight lots at the taxi pick up point to provide a faster clearance rate. The idea was immediately accepted.

This practice of staff participation was carried through to the design of Terminal 2. With the benefit of the operating experience from Terminal 1, the architects and engineers sat down again with the airport staff and workers.

Again, there were plenty of ideas for improvement. The check in counters and the baggage retrieval areas were designed with a bit more space. Those in

Terminal 1, although ample, were found to be crowded during the peak hours.

The Immigration and Customs counters were also redesigned to give an even

friendlier touch. These and many other improvements help to make Terminal 2 even more comfortable, user friendly and efficient.

Terminal 2 is indeed a handsome structure. To get the best out of it, it must be complemented by quality service provided to travelers. Otherwise, the

physical facilities mean nothing. I cannot over emphasize the importance of high service standards. This means that CAAS must provide a courteous, friendly and efficient service. It means doing it right the first time. It means going out of your way to help or attend to a customer or passenger. It means efficient baggage handling.

Nothing can be more annoying than to arrive at your destination to find that your baggage is missing. I know. I have lost my baggage twice, once at Cairo, the other time at Baghdad. When I went to Cairo, my baggage was sent to the wrong plane at the point of checking in. Fortunately, I recovered it days later, at Frankfurt, on my way home. At Baghdad, I never saw my baggage again. We should ensure that travelers at Changi Airport do not lose their baggage, or have to spend much time locating them. In this regard, Changi Airport has done well. Its baggage mishandling rate of 2.6 bags per 10,000 passengers compares very favorably with the standard set by the International Air Transport Association of 8.0 bags per 10,000 passengers. But we should still try and do better.

We may be overzealous in our strive for perfection. But that is better than being complacent. We started off as a nation with many severe disadvantages. Though we have done well, these disadvantages are still with us - limitation of

size, a small population, lack of natural resources and so on. In the case of civil aviation, we do not even have as good a location as some of the other airports in the region. And the only way to achieve an edge over them to become a global air hub is through our ability to offer a better service. And this should apply not only to Changi Airport, but to everything. Whether it is a disk drive that you are making or whether you are serving food in a restaurant, we just have to do our best, and ensure that our best is better than other people's best.

Changi Airport's success story proves the Singaporeans can excel in international competition. We have set high standards for ourselves and we have made the grade. We must never let these standards drop. Instead, we should strive to raise them, through regular training of people, through investment in new facilities, through greater participation of everyone in making Singapore better. If each of us commits ourselves to perform our best, Changi Airport and

Singapore will continue to thrive.

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Many people are involved in building and running Changi Airport. I congratulate all of you who have contributed directly to Changi Airport's success - architects, the engineers, the officials from Ministry of Communications, the contractors and construction workers, and all the staff of the Airport. I also congratulate all others who have indirectly contributed to Changi Airport's

success. These are the rest of Singaporeans who have made Singapore attractive to the business travelers and foreign tourists. Without them playing their part, few people will want to visit Singapore, for business, pleasure or stopovers.

I now take great delight in declaring Changi Airport's Terminal 2 officially open.

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