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**SPEECH BY MS SIM ANN, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE, MINISTRY FOR TRADE AND INDUSTRY AND MINISTRY OF CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH AT THE EXCELLENT SERVICE AWARD 2017 PRESENTATION CEREMONY FOR THE F&B INDUSTRY, THURSDAY, 5 OCTOBER 2017, 2.25 PM, NTUC AUDITORIUM AT ONE MARINA BOULEVARD**

Mr Vincent Tan, President of the Restaurant Association of Singapore,

Award Recipients and Company Representatives in the F&B industry,

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

### **Introduction**

1. A very good afternoon. I am pleased to join you at this year's Excellent Service Award (EXSA) ceremony for the F&B industry, organised by the Restaurant Association of Singapore.

2. The EXSA is a national-level award that recognises and celebrates the efforts of individuals who have delivered quality service, to inspire them to scale new heights in their daily work. In turn, these EXSA service champions serve as role models for others in the industry, thus promulgating service excellence across the entire F&B sector in Singapore.

### **Good service builds strong brand identity and customer loyalty**

3. Food is a key component of Singaporean culture. Singaporeans are justifiably proud of our diverse range of cuisines that represent our country's

unique story and shared heritage. Our status as a vibrant food hub has also become a strong selling point for Singapore's appeal as a tourist destination. All this would not be possible without the hard work by our F&B establishments, many of whom pride yourselves on serving up delicious, memorable food that gives customers value-for-money.

4. In an increasingly competitive F&B landscape, good service has also emerged as a differentiating factor that builds strong brand identity and customer loyalty. I have heard many F&B business owners share their insights, not just on how to satisfy customers' tastebuds, but also to touch their hearts. This requires a clear business vision, meticulous management, investment in staff training, and, ultimately, thoughtful execution by frontline employees. It is because of this that service champions like EXSA winners are highly valued.

5. I would like to commend the companies that have supported the EXSA and nominated your employees. By recognising your employees' good work, you are motivating your staff and investing in the continued success of your business – and also strengthening our society's appreciation of a strong service culture. I thank the RAS for taking the lead in this effort.

## **Transformation in the Food Services Industry** of Singapore

6. Aside from championing good service, RAS and other stakeholders the F&B industry have also recognised the need to support transformation efforts for innovation and productivity.

7. They have worked with the Government to develop the Food Services Industry Transformation Map (ITM), which was launched in September 2016. The ITM charts out four key strategies for food services companies to catalyse growth and competitiveness over the next five years. These are: developing

innovative business formats, promoting technology adoption, raising employees' skills and versatility, and expanding the footprint of Singapore F&B companies in overseas markets.

8. I have been encouraged by the industry's response to the Government's call to transform. As of early 2017, more than 1,400 food outlets have adopted digital solutions like digital ordering and cashless payments, to simplify work processes and achieve greater productivity. In May this year, two productive coffee shops were launched in Tampines and Choa Chu Kang, with more opening in Bukit Batok, Yishun, and Punggol. Yet, much more can be done. The Government invites all enterprises to come onboard this journey with us, to work towards a better and more sustainable future for the Food Services Industry.

9. Our F&B establishments are gaining more experience on how to use technology, not to replace the human touch in providing customer service, but to save effort on repetitive tasks so that valued manpower can be focused on giving customers a good face-to-face experience.

10. One example of a company that has succeeded in doing so is The Happy Roots, the owner of Cali Café situated in the Park Avenue Hotel at Rochester Park. Cali Café caters to both walk-in guests at its premises, as well as hotel guests via room service. In April 2017, the café implemented a self-navigating food service robot to deliver food orders to hotel rooms, thus automating an otherwise manpower-intensive process and allowing the company to free up two headcounts for front-of-house operations. This has in turn enabled staff of the Cali Café to focus on providing good service through other means, such as being more attentive to customer needs. My congratulations to Cali Café colleagues who will be awarded the EXSA today.

## **Upskilling of Food Service Industry Employees**

11. In line with industry transformation, I urge companies to continue investing in their employees. This is aligned with the third prong of the Food Services ITM, which looks at deepening worker skills, providing better career progression pathways, and redesigning jobs to be more fulfilling.

12. To our EXSA winners and food service industry members, I encourage you to upskill and upgrade yourselves for continued relevance and job opportunities in Singapore's future economy. To guide workers in this effort, the Skills Framework for the Food Services sector was launched in August this year by three Government agencies – SkillsFuture Singapore, Workforce Singapore and SPRING Singapore. The Skills Framework outlines the necessary skills for 52 sector-specific jobs, and includes emerging skills such as working with information technology while implementing operations for service excellence. The Government has engaged with potential training providers to ensure that they are aligned closely to this framework, so as to provide the necessary support for our service professionals to grow and enjoy meaningful careers.

## **Conclusion** National Archives of Singapore

13. In closing, I would like to express my appreciation to all of you in the Food Services industry for your dedication and hard work. To the award winners, my heartiest congratulations on your commendable achievements!

14. Thank you.