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**SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN,
MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS,
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING CEREMONY OF
THE NEW FINGER PIERS OF TERMINAL 2, CHANGI AIRPORT
ON SATURDAY, 20 JULY 1996 AT 10.20 AM**

Introduction

It is a pleasure for me to be here with all of you to witness yet another milestone in Changi Airport's development - the opening of the two finger piers of Terminal 2.

Changi Airport opened in 1981 with Terminal 1 handling eight million passenger movements a year. By the time Terminal 2 was opened in 1990, Changi Airport was handling more than 15 million passengers a year. This year, passenger volume is expected to reach 25 million.

Over the years, Changi Airport has undertaken many carefully planned infrastructural developments, to keep up with increasing traffic and meet changing passengers' expectations.

New Finger Piers

The addition of two new finger piers with a net increase of 17 aerobridge gates to Terminal 2 is very timely. Embarking or disembarking an aircraft through a connecting aerobridge directly from the terminal building is now the minimum standard required of a modern airport. Ten years ago, passengers would think nothing of taking a bus from the terminal to the aircraft or vice versa. Today, busing is considered inferior service. Passengers have shown a clear preference for aerobridges.

It cost the airport authority over \$300 m to build these two new piers. The construction took two years. These new aerobridges are designed to accommodate most types of commercial aircraft including the latest Boeing 777 and the Airbus A340.

If you look around the new piers, you would agree with me that special attention has been given to ensure passengers' comfort. They offer not just a functional infrastructure, but also nice touches such as open view of the airside along comfortable walkways and travellators. There are even sushi bars and specialty shops thrown in to cater to passengers' needs before their departure.

Response to Challenges of a booming Asia Pacific Region

But, as we are all aware, Changi Airport is not the only one making huge investments to cope with the growing demands of air travel in the Asia Pacific region. New airports such as Kuala Lumpur's Sepang Airport and Hong Kong's Chek Lap Kok Airport will come on stream before the turn of the century. They are state-of-the-art airports designed to cater to many more passengers well into the next century.

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The challenge facing all the airports in this region is the same. How can we serve the growing number of air travellers who are used to good service and expect even better quality service? The men and women who are responsible for Changi Airport ask this question all the time. The answers are time-tested and proven ones.

Adequate Infrastructure

First, Changi Airport must constantly make improvements to its infrastructure, providing capacity ahead of demand.

Even as we gather here to celebrate the opening of these two finger piers at T2, work on expansion to Terminal 1 has started. When completed by 1999, Terminal 1 will have two extended finger piers and 14 more aerobridge parking bays. The plan is also to upgrade operational systems such as the baggage handling system and check-in facilities. Early in the next century, Terminal 3 will be coming on stream. In the longer term, a third runway and new terminal buildings may be needed.

Increased Efficiency of Airport Operations using Technology

But improvements in hardware and infrastructure alone are not enough, if they do not lead to greater efficiency. Efficiency is the key to Changi Airport's success. Whether it is checking-in for a departure flight, or baggage claim upon arrival, passengers demand swift service and we must keep up our

efficiency to meet their demands. Changi Airport should spare no effort to achieve efficiency through good management, new technology, better equipment and procedures, and the enthusiasm and commitment of our people.

As the airport expands to handle increasing traffic, operations become more and more complex. The greater use of information technology at Changi Airport is an important means not only to improve efficiency and service level of airport operations but also to optimise the use of resources.

I am glad to note that Changi Airport has been actively introducing IT applications and automation systems to enhance airport operations. A recent accomplishment is the automated Changi Gate Management System. Using artificial intelligence, the system performs automatic real-time allocation of aircraft parking bays assigned to arriving and departing aircraft. This, together with the additional new aerobridge gates provided by the two new finger piers, means a higher service level to passengers.

To reach out to its customers worldwide, Changi Airport has also launched its On-line Guide on the Internet World Wide Web. I understand that linkages with other web pages of major airlines and travel-related services are being established, to provide a one-stop service to our customers. With this, passengers worldwide can plan their travel itinerary from their homes or offices, making use of speedy and convenient flight connections through Singapore.

Interactive multi-media information kiosks in five different languages are among the latest features available in the passenger terminal. Passenger can obtain practically any information about the airport by just a touch of the screen.

There is much more to be explored in today's information age. I would encourage the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) and airport organisations to work closely together to explore new areas of information technology (IT) applications to serve its customers better.

Quality Service by Airport staff

Thanks to Singapore's vast air network, more than 50,000 passengers pass through Changi Airport each day. They are from different cultures and background, with distinct likes and dislikes. To make their brief stay at Changi Airport a pleasant and memorable one, we must make them feel at home. Courtesy of our airport staff is therefore the very essence of giving our customers a positive airport experience.

The airport gives our visitors the first impression of Singapore when they arrive, and leave them with the last memory as they depart. Changi Airport's ability to continue to stay ahead will increasingly depend on the airport staff's willingness to serve, and serve well.

Over the years, CAAS and other airport organisations have done a marvellous job in raising the service level of airport staff. Changi Airport will be a truly wonderful airport if every airport staff, every immigration and customs officer, every security officer, every check-in counter staff, every airport information hostess, every cleaner, and every shop assistant can give that extra service with a smile. Treat the airport as your home, and the passengers as your guests and touch their hearts with your warm and friendly service.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, on this official opening of the two new finger piers of Terminal 2, I would like to congratulate all airport staff of Changi Airport for the excellent work so far. I am confident you will rise to the challenge and continue to provide the highest standards of service to the growing number of air passengers who come to visit us.

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