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**SPEECH BY MR GOH CHEE WEE,  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR TRADE & INDUSTRY AND  
COMMUNICATIONS, AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING  
CEREMONY OF THE GREAT SINGAPORE SALE  
AT CHANGI AIRPORT TERMINAL 2,  
ON FRIDAY, 28 JUNE 1996 AT 11.00 AM**

1. I am very happy to be here today at the launch of this year's Great Singapore Sale.
2. The Great Singapore Sale has entered into its third year and it is one with a difference. This year, the Sale is organised and driven by the private sector, represented by the Singapore Retailers Association and The Association of Shopping Centre Management, with the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board now playing a supporting role. The organisers have put together an events-filled affair with the aim of providing both local and foreign shoppers a "total shopping experience".
3. Price incentives in the form of discounts, gifts and other privileges will be only one aspect of the Sale; other components of the shopping experience will include special performances and events and the staging of "live" TV shows at various shopping centres throughout the Sale period. Shoppers will also stand to win many attractive prizes in a grand draw as well as a chance to appear on television with popular local TV celebrities.
4. For the first time, the Sale will be extended beyond its traditional confines of the Orchard Road shopping belt to suburban shopping centres like Yishun. The whole of Singapore will therefore be immersed in an exciting month-long celebration of the best buys that Singapore has to offer. Tourists, in particular, will get to enjoy a new and unique shopping experience browsing and mingling among the locals in the suburban centres.
5. According to STPB's survey of overseas visitors, Singapore is still widely regarded as a good place to shop. The 1995 survey reports that 85% of visitors shopped during their stay in Singapore. These visitors gave shopping in Singapore a rating of 8.1 points out of a maximum score of 10 when it came to the variety of goods on offer.
6. But Singapore's reputation as a shopping haven should not be taken for granted. We are facing intense competition from countries in the region and our retail industry must continue to explore innovative and winning ways to do business. To enhance the reputation of Singapore as the premier destination for quality goods, the range and quality of merchandise in our stores and shops must rival those in New York, London and Tokyo.
7. We must also focus our attention on the quality of customers service. As consumer sophistication and expectations rise, shoppers will expect and demand better service from the sales staff. STPB is currently working with the Singapore Retailers Association to introduce a new scheme aimed at making quality customer service an industry-wide norm.
8. This new scheme which will eventually replace the current Good Retailer Scheme will have a greater influence on the retail industry development. Outstanding retailers will be admitted into this scheme which will incorporate a stringent set of criteria to enhance its prestige. These members of the scheme will then lead the rest of the retail industry in setting new benchmarks in quality service.
9. Another scheme which STPB is working on is the GST refund mechanism for tourists. At the moment GST refunds have to be mailed to tourists after they have left Singapore. STPB and the Singapore

Retailers Association will be working out a new arrangement which will allow tourists to obtain their GST refunds at the airport before they leave for home. The scheme can be introduced sometime next year if all the anticipated problems could be resolved.

10. Through events like the Great Singapore Sale and the Singapore Food Festival which will kick off this Sunday, we hope to project the image of Singapore as a vibrant and exciting city for tourists and Singaporeans alike. These events also play a key role in increasing Singapore's tourist arrivals while enhancing the quality of life for Singaporeans.

11. In closing, I would like to commend this year's Sale organising committee and everyone else involved. I wish you all every success. And I hope you will take on the challenge to grow the Sale over time into a shopping festival of international repute and prestige.

12. It now gives me great pleasure to launch the 1996 Great Singapore Sale.

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