

mbt19990129a

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460  
Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 3.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

PLEASE CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN,

MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS

AT THE CHANGI AIRPORT LINE  
GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY

ON FRIDAY 29 JANUARY 1999 AT 10 AM AT

THE WORKSITE IN FRONT OF TERMINAL 2,

SINGAPORE CHANGI AIRPORT

-----

Your Excellency, Mr Hiroshi Hashimoto, Ambassador of Japan to Singapore

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen

1 I am most delighted to be here this morning to officiate at this groundbreaking ceremony for the Changi Airport Line. We have come a long way since the Government first announced the intention to build the \$850 million Changi Airport Line in November 1996.

2 I recall that when the designs for the two stations on the Line, the Changi Airport Station and the Expo Station, were unveiled about a year ago, there was a lot of excitement. The designs are futuristic yet functional and very much in keeping with the world-class facilities that they will serve. Much thought has gone into the station designs as they are the gateway to Singapore for those arriving here by air. After all, we do want our visitors as well as Singaporeans returning home to feel most welcomed.

3 Singapore has not been spared the effects of the recent regional economic turmoil. Passenger traffic in 1998 saw a drop for the first time in a decade. Last year, the Singapore Changi Airport handled 23.8 million passengers, some 5.4% lower than in 1997. The good news is that the fall seems to be tapering off. In the last quarter of 1998, there was a modest 2.7% increase in passenger numbers over the last quarter of 1997. It is possible that we may achieve a small growth in traffic this year.

4 The Changi Airport Line will be a boost to the Singapore Changi Airport. When completed in 2001, the Changi Airport Line will link the Singapore Changi Airport to the city centre via the East-West MRT Line. The trip in air-conditioned comfort will be only 30 minutes. The MRT train will be accessible directly from the Airport because the Changi Airport Station is integrated with the Terminal 2 and the future Terminal 3.

5 The Land Transport Authority has made good progress with the work on the Changi Airport Line. They have already awarded all the major civil and Electrical & Mechanical contracts for the line. In total more than 17 major contractors are now on board this project. This simple ceremony today brings us yet another step closer to making the Changi Airport MRT connection a reality.

#### Construction challenges

6 The building of this MRT extension to the Airport presents a huge challenge for LTA engineers and contractors. They have to ensure that the construction activities do not affect the day-to-day operations of the Airport. This is not an easy task. The Changi Airport station is a massive underground station about the size of two football fields, located just in front of the Changi Control Tower, and underneath the existing Terminal 2 building. This ceremony site is where the Changi Airport Station will be.

7 Both the LTA and the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS), must work very closely together on this project. One successful example of this close

co-operation can be seen in the realignment of the Airport Boulevard.

8 Before construction of the station box could begin, the road leading to and from the Airport had to be realigned. This had to be done with no compromise to the traffic flow. LTA and CAAS, working closely with the Contractors, managed well as the realignment went almost unnoticed. This is as it should be, as life must go on even as construction work takes place behind the hoardings.

9 The construction of Changi Airport station will involve deep excavation under the existing Terminal 2 structures. In addition to making sure that the construction work does not affect the airport operations, LTA engineers and contractors will also need to make sure that there is no disruption to an operating skytrain system. To do all this, they will be using the most up-to-date forms of ground support and underpinning techniques and there will be extensive monitoring of ground movement to ensure no damage or disruption occurs.

10 Another major challenge is the construction of the tunnels connecting the Airport. About one km of these will run directly underneath the Airport and the runway. This requires precision working under close monitoring. The work must be carried out without affecting the operation of the runway and above all safety must never be compromised.

11 To achieve this, the LTA will be using the most sophisticated tunnelling machines to construct the tunnels. These tunnel boring machines are designed to drive tunnels in the most unstable ground conditions, providing constant pressurised support to the earth as tunnelling is carried out. Although the ground under Changi is generally good yet there are pockets of soft marine clay underneath the good soil. LTA has decided to invest in these sophisticated machines to ensure that tunnelling can be done with minimum disruption to activities of the Airport and plane movement on the runway.

12 As we can see, the work on the Changi Airport Line will be very exacting. It will require precision engineering and close co-ordination with many parties. The LTA will not only have to work closely with the contractors but also the CAAS to ensure that the construction work does not affect the operations of the Airport too much. Having said this, there will be some disruption such as traffic diversions and inconveniences because of relocation of taxi stands and parking areas.

13 But these are minor inconveniences as long as the efficiency of airport services are not compromised. I am sure airport users will bear with any inconvenience caused.

Safety of the highest standard

14 Before I conclude, I would like to mention that in any construction project, safety at the worksite is paramount as unsafe practices often result in loss of life and limb. I am therefore delighted to note that the three major civil engineering

mbt19990129a

contractors, Penta Ocean-L&M Joint Venture, Nishimatsu Construction Co. Ltd and Kumagai Gumi SembCorp Joint Venture, will today make a special pledge to achieve in Singapore the high standards of safety achieved in Japan. It is this sense of professionalism and commitment that I would like to see from all the contractors involved in the building of the Changi Airport Line.

15 On this note, I wish the LTA and the contractors every success as they undertake this massive venture together with the CAAS.

Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore