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SPEECH BY MR MAH BOW TAN, MINISTER FOR COMMUNICATIONS,
AT THE NATIONAL DAY OBSERVANCE CEREMONY
AT HITACHI ZOSEN SINGAPORE (PTE) LTD, 15 BENOI ROAD,
ON 11 AUGUST 92 AT 8.00 AM

I understand that Hitachi Zosen has been holding this National Observance Ceremony every year since 1978. I am happy to join all of you this morning in this year's National Day Celebration. It is certainly a meaningful tradition worth keeping and one which I hope will last for many more years to come.

2 Hitachi Zosen came to Singapore in 1970, 22 years ago. Like many investors which set up business in Singapore around that time, it was attracted by political stability, efficient infrastructure, and plentiful supply of inexpensive labour. Today, the first 2 factors are still present, but our labour situation is no longer the same. With strong economic growth, labour supply is tight and labour is no longer inexpensive. Your company is facing this challenge by spending more time and money on upgrading its workers. It is significant that in your in-house newsletter, Zosen View, the first 4 articles were all about training - skills-testing, apprenticeship training, and COSEC training.

3 It is this kind of positive attitude that will enable Hitachi Zosen to remain a leading shipyard in Singapore. It is the same attitude that has made Singapore what it is today. We have a people determined to succeed, although we may be faced with all kinds of challenges and difficulties. For a small country like Singapore with no natural resources to gain international recognition, we must work extra hard and put in extra effort. Because we have done this, we can claim to be World No. 1 in several fields. If they were to give away medals in how to run a port or airport or airline, we would be winning gold medals in these areas.

4 The Olympic Games is now on. As I watch the sportsmen and women run, jump, swim, I keep thinking about the determination, the sweat and tears they have gone through to reach this situation. I ask myself: Why are they training so hard, sacrificing so much to win that little medal? Then when I see them standing in the winner's rostrum, with pride on their faces, listening to their national anthem, I think I know why. They want to prove that they can do it, to be able to run faster, jump higher, and be stronger than anyone else in the world. That is determination.

5 Take the case of Nelson Diebel, the American swimmer. He was a drug addict. He had drinking problems and was in trouble with the police. He decided he wanted to be a somebody. He was determined to succeed in spite of his past. He beat the favourites to win a gold medal. Another lovely story is that of a woman called Gail Devers. Few of us had heard of her. Two years ago, she could hardly walk because of a disease that affected her legs. Few days ago, she ran so fast that she won the 100m gold medal for women. But the picture that will stick in my mind for a long time is that of the British runner Derek Redmond being helped by his father to complete the 400m, even though he could hardly run due to a hamstring injury. He limped to complete the race. He was last. But the crowd cheered him all the way, because he showed them that the Olympic spirit is not only about winning, but also about taking part and not giving up.

6 People like Nelson Diebel, Gail Devers, and Derek Redmond have shown us the meaning of striving for excellence, of wanting to win so badly that they overcome huge obstacles, and even if you cannot win, of doing your best and never giving up. On the other hand, there were some who did not succeed, gold medal winners or world-record holders, who lost out either because they lost interest or became too complacent. In the last Olympic Games, Matt Biondi won 5 gold medals in the swimming competition. In these Games, he did not win a single individual gold.

7 Judging from the activities that you have in this company, I believe most of you are active in sports. So you know that if you want to become a winner, if you want that gold medal, you have to train your guts out. It is the same for our country. We have won medals in many areas. But if we want to retain our medals, our position, we too must train our guts out. If we become complacent, disinterested, or worse still arrogant, then we will lose what we have gained. It took us 27 years to achieve what we have today. We are like runners in a marathon race. We have to keep up with the pace or we will be left behind. Remember, there are many other runners in the race. The Olympics has many lessons for us from those who succeeded as well as those who did not.

8 In conclusion, may I take this opportunity to congratulate Hitachi Zosen on receiving in-principle approval to be listed on the Stock Exchange of Singapore. May you continue to grow and prosper together with Singapore and may we celebrate many more National Days together.

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