

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR S ISWARAN, MINISTER FOR
TRANSPORT AND MINISTER-IN-CHARGE OF TRADE
RELATIONS, AT THE CHANGI AIRLINE AWARDS 2022,
4 MAY 2022**

Mr Tan Gee Paw, Chairman, Changi Airport Group

Mr Lee Seow Hiang, Chief Executive Officer

Members of the Aviation Community

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. A very good evening. I am delighted to join all of you at tonight's Changi Airline Awards, which is taking place for the first time after a two-year enforced break. I am thankful for this opportunity to gather in person with friends and familiar faces in the aviation community and have some live music and a show. All in all, things are looking up and we must sustain that.

Reviving the Changi Air Hub as one Aviation Ecosystem

2. I recently returned from an official trip to Australia, and was really pleased to experience the familiar buzz of passenger traffic in Changi Airport. It has been a long and difficult two years, but there is now, certainly, a palpable sense of optimism that air travel recovery will continue to pick up and gather momentum.

3. On the part of the Government, we are committed to the strong recovery of our Changi Air Hub. As a global trading and business centre, our air hub is of strategic and indeed existential importance for Singapore. It supports essential economic linkages and people-to-people flows with the rest of the world. It also catalyses growth opportunities for our economy.

4. Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have leveraged our strong tripartite relationship between the Government, the industry, and the union movement, to mount a comprehensive and decisive response in support of our airline partners and the aviation community. By way of immediate assistance, we swiftly stepped up wage and training support to protect jobs and preserve core capabilities. We also disbursed cost relief for landing and parking charges, as well as rental costs. For the longer term, we doubled down on our investment in digitalisation and automation, to transform the sector and more importantly, to be better prepared for the future and build back better.

5. The support and resources invested have helped to avert significant, even irreversible, economic scarring for our business and leisure sector. It has helped to keep our workforce productive, and enabled the sector to rebound quickly.

Taking Stock of our Air Travel Recovery Efforts

6. It has been a month since we reopened our borders to all fully vaccinated travellers under the Vaccinated Travel Framework. This was, as you all know, a major milestone in Singapore's journey to reopen our economy and to reconnect with the world – which is absolutely vital for a small and open city-state like ours.

7. We are off to a good start. Passenger movements at Changi have more than doubled from about 18% of pre-COVID levels in March to close to 40% in the end of April. It has made significant improvement. This will grow further in the coming months as more flights and passengers return. We are well on track to restoring passenger volumes at Changi Airport to at least 50% of pre-COVID levels by this year.

8. Ramping up operations so quickly is, as all of you will appreciate, no mean feat. We should not underestimate the enormity of the challenge and we have seen this in many airports around the world as well. In Changi, our aviation stakeholders – from Changi Airport Group, to the airlines and ground handlers – have been working assiduously to facilitate smooth airport operations. I know the ramp up has and continues to pose significant challenges given the speed, and also the scale and complexity of operations at a global air hub like Changi. I also know our aviation partners are doing their level best and going to extraordinary lengths to get the job done. You have the Government's full support. I am confident that by working together as one aviation ecosystem, we will bring back the distinctive and seamless experience that is the hallmark of Changi.

Connectivity and the Post-Pandemic Air Hub

9. Beyond our immediate recovery efforts, it is important that our air hub thrives in the post-pandemic world. According to IATA, while the Asia Pacific is only expected to reach pre-COVID levels one year after the rest of the world, the region is poised to return to robust growth as the largest travel market globally. Singapore and our regional partners are well positioned to capture these opportunities and rising demand. Against this backdrop, our airline partners and the Changi network will be key.
10. The strength of our air hub has always been its connectivity, and we are committed to working closely with airlines partners to grow this network. In this regard, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all our airline partners for your partnership and steadfast support through the years and throughout the pandemic.

11. We must not only preserve our previous links or restore our previous links, but go beyond to expand the network, densify schedules, and forge new partnerships with airlines.

12. I am therefore encouraged that despite the pandemic, Changi established two new passenger city links and welcomed seven new passenger airlines over the past year. To those of you who are new to the Changi community – we warmly welcome you.

13. Opportunities are also growing in the air cargo segment. It was a bright spot during the pandemic, as cargo volumes and flights remained resilient. Thanks to the collective efforts of the air cargo community, we shored up supply chains and helped key industries in Singapore sustain and grow their operations, such as in pharmaceuticals and semiconductors. Tapping on our close partnerships under the Changi Ready Taskforce, we harnessed our connectivity and freight

capabilities to enable the distribution of essential goods and COVID-19 vaccines to the region.

14. The cargo community too has benefitted. Since the start of the pandemic, average cargo aircraft movements have tripled. We welcomed six new scheduled freighter operators. In addition, express integrators DHL Express and Fedex have also expanded their intercontinental network in Singapore to serve the robust demand in the region.

15. Hence, while tonight's awards are focused on passenger airlines, I would like to express a special thanks to our airline partners for stepping up freighter and passenger aircraft for cargo-conveyance (or PACC) operations throughout the pandemic. We will continue to work with the air cargo community to develop new growth levers, such as multimodal connectivity, and accelerate digital transformation and information sharing in our ecosystem. I am confident that more opportunities lie ahead for Changi to bring value to cargo

customers, amid ongoing disruptions to global supply chains and the expansion of e-commerce.

16. To conclude, the Changi air hub is synonymous with excellent international connectivity, exceptional facilities, and a seamless passenger experience. All the airlines represented here today are key partners of the enterprise that has made this possible. In the post-pandemic world, we will need to redouble our efforts as one united ecosystem to push the frontiers of excellence, and enhance Changi's status as a world-class international aviation hub.

17. Once again, I want to thank our airline partners for your strong collaboration with Changi and the rest of aviation community. My heartiest congratulations to the winners of this year's Changi Airline Awards, and we look forward to forging new partnerships as Changi soars again.

18. Thank you.