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Changi Airport Unveils ‘The Courage to Dream – The Making of the Changi Airport Story’: A Tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s Contributions to Singapore’s Air Hub

Journey through time in this immersive exhibition commemorating LKY100, and discover untold stories about the founding of Changi Airport, including the values underpinning its success

Singapore, 15 September 2023 – Experience the extraordinary journey of one man’s unwavering courage to dream and how it materialised into the world-class aviation hub that Changi Airport is today. Step into ‘**The Courage to Dream – The Making of the Changi Airport Story**’, an LKY100 commemorative exhibition to be held at Jewel Changi Airport starting tomorrow. Featuring six interactive zones, the immersive walkthrough exhibition commemorates the visionary leadership, boldness and conviction of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew. It also showcases how Mr Lee and his team of leaders made Changi Airport possible and paved the way for its success. Through untold stories illustrated in engaging displays, with rarely seen archival content, visitors can embark on a nostalgic voyage through time from the 1970s to present day, and even get a glimpse of the exciting future of aviation. The exhibition will be open to the public for free from 16 to 30 September at Cloud9 Piazza, Level 5 of Jewel Changi Airport. Thereafter, the exhibition will be moved to another location within the airport (details will be released at a later date).

The beginning of Changi Airport (1960s to 2000s)

With four zones depicting the period between 1960s and 2000s, visitors can travel back in time to witness the early days of Singapore’s aviation history. The journey begins in **Chapter 1: Growing Pains**. Here, visitors will learn about the history and growth of Paya Lebar Airport in the early 1970s, as well as the challenges faced by residents who had to endure the inconveniences of living so close to an airport with flight paths across the heart of the island city, leading to disruptions in their daily lives. Look out for the historical moment of the first-ever mention of Changi, featuring the actual audio clip of Mr Lee, then Prime Minister, speaking to a crowd in Katong about a possible move of the airport from Paya Lebar to Changi.

However, in **Chapter 2: Dreams are Made of Struggles**, visitors soon learn that the transition was far from straightforward. The pace of air traffic growth constituted an urgent need for quick expansion, which pointed to Paya Lebar as the more immediate and feasible solution. Follow the twists and turns in

the first half of the 1970s, as Mr Lee and his team of leaders struggled with the difficult decision of the move, which involved weighing various significant trade-offs, including impact to surroundings, potential for expansion, time pressure and cost. Through story exhibits and interactive digital activities, visitors can understand each of these considerations and relive the dilemma that Mr Lee then faced.

The 1973 oil crisis brought about an abrupt slowdown, which bought time and led to the unexpected opportunity to revisit the Changi option – a prospect that Mr Lee was convinced was better for Singapore in the longer run. His conviction was affirmed during a chance flight over Boston's Logan Airport in the United States, where he saw for himself the benefits of having flight paths being offshore.

In 1975, Mr Lee convened the Special Committee on Airport Development (SCAD), headed by Mr Howe Yoon Chong, then Head of the Civil Service and Chairman of Port of Singapore Authority. In a mere three months, the committee presented its recommendations, advocating for the construction of two runways at Changi to swiftly expand airport capacity and boost Singapore's economic growth.

For the first-time ever, visitors can also view a signed cover page of the pivotal SCAD final report, which led to the green light for the development of Changi Airport. In this zone, visitors can also find out more about Mr Howe and Mr Sim Kee Boon - the two men credited for helping to realise the Changi dream.

After 1977, the monumental construction of Changi Airport began. In **Chapter 4: Showtime: The Making of Changi Airport**, visitors can watch a short film on the creation of Changi Airport, which features rarely seen archival documentary footage of the construction of Terminal 1 and first-hand sharing from pioneering airport leaders on Mr Lee's vision and leadership. Key development milestones of Terminal 1 are also chronicled through a series of archival photographs, leading up to the momentous opening of Changi Airport on 1 July 1981, heralding the dawn of a new era in aviation history.

Putting Changi Airport on the world map (2000s to present day)

In **Chapter 5: The Pursuit of Excellence**, enjoy anecdote-filled stories of how Mr Lee and the airport's founding leaders drove the successful establishment of Changi as a vibrant air hub and its growth to the world's most awarded airport. Visitors can see the early master plan of Changi Airport in 1981 and witness its transformation through the decades, evolving from a single terminal to a world-class aviation hub with multiple terminals. The then-Prime Minister had set exacting standards for Changi Airport, taking a personal and deep interest in matters including greening the airport, cleanliness of its toilets, eradicating queues and the securing of city links. This dedication to excellence, attention to detail, and emphasis on growing the air hub continue to guide the management of Changi Airport today. Mr Lee's refrain for Changi to never rest on its laurels has also driven a constant spirit of innovation, manifested in new initiatives to enhance the air hub's competitiveness, including the opening of Jewel Changi Airport in 2019.

The future of aviation (beyond 2023)

Looking ahead to the future, **Chapter 6: Building on the Dream** illustrates how the decisions made decades ago are today instrumental to the next chapter of Changi Airport. The foresight and decisiveness to invest in a second massive and complex land reclamation effort in the 1990s had laid the foundation for today's monumental undertaking – the Changi East development, which includes a new Terminal 5.

Mr Jayson Goh, Executive Vice President of Airport Management, Changi Airport Group, said, "Mr Lee Kuan Yew's bold decision to relocate Singapore's airport from Paya Lebar to Changi marked a pivotal moment in aviation history. To this day, we continue to be deeply grateful for the vision, courage and conviction demonstrated by Mr Lee and our pioneering airport leaders, which paved the way for Changi Airport's growth over the past decades and beyond. We hope to inspire and educate the community through these lesser-told stories, which highlight the values that made Changi Airport possible and still guide how we run the airport today."

Details of the exhibition's next run after 30 September will be released at a later date. Visit ['The Courage to Dream'](#) website for more information.

For high resolution images, download from <https://changi.me/LKY100ChangiAirport>.

About Changi Airport Group

Changi Airport Group (Singapore) Pte Ltd (CAG) (www.changiairportgroup.com) was formed on 16 June 2009 and the corporatisation of Singapore Changi Airport (IATA: SIN, ICAO: WSSS) followed on 1 July 2009. As the company managing Changi Airport, CAG undertakes key functions focusing on airport operations and management, air hub development, commercial activities and airport emergency services. CAG also manages Seletar Airport (IATA: XSP, ICAO: WSSL) and through its subsidiary Changi Airports International, invests in and manages foreign airports.

As one of Asia's most connected international aviation hubs, Changi Airport links Singapore to some 140 cities globally, with over 100 airlines operating more than 6,000 weekly flights. Jewel Changi Airport, a multi-dimensional lifestyle destination, opened in April 2019, adding to Changi Airport's shopping and dining offerings of over 550 F&B and retail outlets across the airport. The world's most awarded airport, Changi has won over 650 accolades for its consistent and excellent airport staff service, passenger experience and safety standards.

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