

**SPEECH BY S DHANABALAN, CHAIRMAN OF TEMASEK HOLDINGS
AT THE LAUNCH OF 'HOWE YOON CHONG PSA ENDOWMENT FUND'
ON TUESDAY 13 MAY 2008**

I am very pleased to be here this morning to launch the Howe Yoon Chong PSA Endowment Fund. We are here to honour an outstanding visionary of Singapore who laid the foundation of some of the key elements of our social and economic infrastructure--elements which we take for granted to-day.

I am privileged to have had a relationship with him as his subordinate and his colleague, also as a friend and confidant for more than 45 years. But my regard and respect for him is such that I have never been able to address him as anything other than Mr Howe and never Yoon Chong. Mr Howe was an amalgam of opposing character traits--- sternness and stubbornness with a tough exterior but in truth, compassionate and considerate with a mind open to persuasion.

But the aspect of him that is best known and that made him an outstanding Singaporean was the tenacity with which he pursued his vision and conviction about what is good for this nation and its people.

His ideas were often far ahead of his time. He was not afraid to make major decisions of importance that did not conform to the conventional view of the day.

He stuck out his neck for contrarian views. Despite vigorous opposition, he would persevere to stay the course. By sheer will power, tenacity and persuasion and bull-doggedness, he often ended up doing what he had planned, proving his judgment to be correct.

Mr Howe, who at one time was the Head of Civil Service, was a most atypical civil servant. Contrary to the popular perception that civil servants are laid back and lack initiative, Mr Howe was always forward-looking, resourceful and energetic in doing what he was convinced was required. His record in this is legendary. I cannot help but recollect some of them.

When he was CEO of HDB in its early days he considered the Fire Department's rules as outdated and not relevant for the conditions in Singapore and for the mass housing program that he was asked to execute. He therefore asked to be relieved from the Fire Department's rules and undertook personal responsibility for any fire loss and damage in HDB flats arising from nonconformity to Fire Department rules.

Thus HDB designed apartment developments were exempted from Fire Department rules. It was only after more than thirty years of HDB developments that the Fire Department finally brought its rules in line with the reality of the situation on the ground.

When the expansion of Paya Lebar airport to meet the needs of Singapore as a rapidly expanding air hub was mooted, he pushed for a completely new airport in Changi. He opposed the idea of a second runway for Paya Lebar, contrary to the views of the experts. I well remember going into his office at DBS one day when he told me with a smile on his face that the PM had agreed to move the whole airport to Changi. He was put in charge of the execution of the project and we all know how well he fulfilled his responsibility. As evidence of his role in bringing about this icon of Singapore he was asked to officially open the airport by the PM.

I also remember sitting in his office in the early seventies discussing whether to proceed with the plan to build Raffles City, a huge billion dollar investment. Our economy like the rest of the world was reeling from the after effects of the massive increase of oil prices in October 1973. The future did not look bright. He decided that we should proceed with the development. His view was that if Raffles City ended as a failed investment, Singapore would be in such dire straits that a failed Raffles City would be one of the least of our worries. As often, he got the perspective right.

To me, Mr Howe's legacy for the Port is a shining example of his significant contribution to Singapore. He spent nearly 10 years as the Chairman of the then Port of Singapore Authority – which has become PSA International today. He began at a time when Singapore had to take over the management of the Port from the last British expatriates. During this time, Mr Howe characteristically

stamped his strong leadership and pursued his vision of what he saw as the future for the port.

To say that Mr Howe managed the Port well is an under-statement. He transformed it and laid the foundation for PSA's growth into one of the world's largest container terminal operators. Mr Howe defied the advice of port experts - not the first or last time that he went against the experts - who said Singapore did not need container handling facilities. He borrowed money from World Bank, and built Singapore's first container terminal which opened in June 1972. From that defining moment, there was no turning back and the Port in Singapore grew to become one of our impressive national icons representing world class efficiency.

Besides greatly improving efficiency at the port, Mr Howe also built up a talent pool of young and bright port managers whom he mentored personally. I understand that from this pool of managers emerged many leaders of PSA in the 1980s and 1990s, long after Mr Howe had left the port scene.

Today, PSA's initiative to honour Mr Howe Yoon Chong by setting up an endowment fund to provide scholarships for students from low income households with at least B average results, is indeed most appropriate. Mr Howe came from a family with modest means and having known him well, I know that he would have greatly appreciated helping someone with creditable but not

outstanding results to pursue post secondary education. When Siew Wah first spoke to me about the fund and scholarship for such students from low income families, I was fully supportive. It would certainly give the deserving students a springboard to a better education and a brighter future.

This endowment fund is vested to perpetuity as we want Mr Howe Yoon Chong to be forever remembered by the future generations of Singaporeans.

It is anticipated that returns from this endowment fund will support 150 scholarships in the first five years for students going to universities, polytechnics and the Institutes of Education. It is my hope that the students benefitting from the scholarships will follow in the footsteps of Mr Howe and contribute positively and immensely to Singapore after they have completed their studies.

Thank you.