

27 November 2023, Monday, 3.30pm

Ms Sim Ann, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of National Development,

Award Recipients and Friends from our F&B industry,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good afternoon and a warm welcome to all of you. Thank you for joining us this afternoon for RAS Excellent Service Award (EXSA) Presentation Ceremony 2023.

2. EXSA is a national recognition to some of the best service professionals in Singapore. And today, we are here to recognise service staff in the F&B industry who have consistently demonstrated exemplary service and professionalism amid an increasingly demanding work environment caused by staffing shortages and high customer expectations. Despite these challenges, our EXSA recipients persist in delivering top-notch service to their customers. This year, we have received 484 nominees for the EXSA Superstar Award, out of which 6 exceptional individuals have been shortlisted as finalists. Even then, the process of selecting these finalists was a difficult one, given every one of these individuals are all deserving SuperStar champions in their own rights.

3. As we step into the 29th year of EXSA since its inception in 1994, I am happy to share an increase of 25% in the participation rate this year. This increase not only underscores employers' ongoing recognition of the importance of delivering good services to its customers, but also demonstrates their commitment to acknowledging and upskilling their service teams.

Symbiotic relationship between F&B sector and Singapore's vibrant tourism and MICE industries

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4. While Singapore has moved beyond the Covid pandemic, the shortage of manpower remains a perennial challenge within the industry, perhaps even more pronounced than before. Many F&B operators have already accelerated their digital transformation efforts, increase technology adoptions to allow employees to focus on more value-added tasks, and even looking at redesigning job roles to help staff keep up with the advancements and changes in the industry. Nevertheless, no matter how extensively we embrace digitalization, streamline processes using technology, the necessity for human interaction remains integral within the service industry. A pleasant customer experience rendered by a service staff not only stands as a key differentiator that will set one apart from its competitors, but also increases the probability of customers returning for another visit.

5. Furthermore, the F&B industry plays a significant role in contributing to Singapore's vibrant tourism industry. Beyond being a cornerstone of the country's famed food culture, it is a key pillar across various sectors within Singapore's wider economy. With multiple global events and conventions being held in Singapore, it is imperative our F&B sector continually elevate and maintain service standards alongside offering quality cuisine to complete the overall experience for our international visitors.

6. Through RAS' annual EXSA training workshops and recognition platform, I am hopeful we can continue to motivate our service staff and employees to deliver their best to their customers, further bolstering Singapore's reputation as a culinary haven offering unique experiences and a must-visit for avid food travellers.

Manpower remains a key success factor for the F&B industry

7. One vital aspect of our industry's success is manpower and our ability to continually regenerate and transform our local workforce, to keep pace with the changing nature of jobs of the future. With the introduction of the Job Transformation Map (JTM) in May, we've collaborated closely with Enterprise Singapore and Workforce Singapore to equip and enhance the skills of our F&B workforce. I'm pleased to share that RAS has been appointed by WSG as the partner for the Career Conversion Programme (CCP), aimed at attracting new talent and facilitating mid-career transitions into the F&B industry, offering up to 6 months of salary support for on-the-job training.

RAS's efforts to support our F&B community in workforce management

8. To further support our sector to attract, develop and retain a higher quality workforce, RAS will also be embarking on a combination of initiatives, including an introduction of a F&B job portal slated for launch before May next year. This collaboration with one of Singapore's top job portals aims to streamline job placements, matching, recruitment, and retention processes. Additionally, the "one-stop shop" portal will integrate features to identify skill gaps effectively and recommend appropriate training modules. In addition to its core functions, the job portal will also offer aggregated and anonymized industry-specific manpower data to help facilitate more effective engagement with policymakers, enabling the identification of challenges faced by the industry, and suggest potential areas for improvement.

9. Last Wednesday, RAS celebrated our Epicurean Star Award and Gala Dinner with 1000 guests representing diverse sub-sector and roles in the F&B community. We were honoured to have the 6 EXSA finalists to join us that evening in presenting one of the main courses to all the VIPs. We are deeply appreciative of you for being the service role models in our industry.

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10. We would like to thank SUSS and SIM for assisting to provide us this wonderful venue – a most appropriate place where continuing education is a key focus.

Allow me to express our deep appreciation to SMS Sim Ann who has specially made time to grace this event. SMS has been deeply involved in the F&B industry and her presence today clearly demonstrates her continuing support for excellent service as a key pillar for our industry. Thank you SMS.

Let us put our hands together to applaud all our F&B service crew for a job well done. Today is your day. We want to appreciate all that you have done and join you to recognise and to celebrate excellent service. Thank you.

(Approximately 845 words @ 120 words/min ~ 7 min)