

**SPEECH BY MR CHEE HONG TAT,
SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE,
MINISTRY OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY &
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
AT THE SHATEC GRADUATION ON 27 NOVEMBER 2019 (WEDNESDAY), 2.05PM
AT THE UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE**

Ms Kwee Wei-Lin, President of Singapore Hotel Association,
Mr Loh Lik Peng, Chairman of SHATEC,
Ms Margaret Heng, Chief Executive of SHATEC,
Graduands, Parents and family members,
Ladies and gentlemen,

INTRODUCTION

1. A very good afternoon to all of you. I am delighted to join you to celebrate this happy occasion with the graduating class of 2019. My warmest congratulations to all of you. You have worked hard to be here today. Well done!

2. It is also timely, at this milestone, to acknowledge those who have supported you throughout your education journey. To our parents, congratulations on your children's achievements. Your support has been instrumental to enable them to graduate with skills that will give them a good start in their careers in the hospitality sector. To our SHATEC trainers, I applaud you for

preparing your students with industry-relevant skills and knowledge, and inspiring them to develop their passion in the hospitality sector.

AN ADAPTABLE WORKFORCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

3. Dear graduands, you are entering the hospitality industry at an exciting time. In the first three quarters of 2019, Singapore's international visitor arrivals grew by 2 percent over the same period last year to reach 14.3 million. While there are global uncertainties, we are confident that Singapore will continue to grow our tourism sector by enhancing our offerings and strengthening our industry capabilities.

4. We have many development plans in the pipeline that you can look forward to. The \$9 billion expansion of the two Integrated Resorts will create up to 5,000 direct jobs, and many more indirect career opportunities for Singaporeans. We are rejuvenating key tourist destinations such as the Mandai Wildlife Reserve, Orchard Road, Jurong Lake District, as well as Sentosa and Brani, as part of the Greater Southern Waterfront project. More hotels and MICE facilities will be built in these locations and other precincts throughout Singapore. There is also scope for existing facilities to expand and re-develop. These efforts reflect the Government's commitment to having long-term

plans to grow our tourism sector, attract new investments and create more good jobs for Singaporeans. We are not done building and growing our economy and tourism industry.

5. Like other sectors, tourism will need to transform to keep up with changing technologies and customer expectations. Many hotels around the world are using tools like facial recognition for automated check-in, robots to augment service staff in their duties, and chatbots to provide information to guests. We have seen this being deployed in hotels in Singapore as well. Smart use of technology has become a necessary skill for companies to improve their productivity and to stay competitive, as well as to provide better service to customers. However, I do not believe that technology will replace the need for human workers in the service industry, certainly not when it comes to the hospitality and lifestyle sector. Customers want the convenience that technology offers, but they also want the warmth and personal touch that only humans can provide to one another. This is why high-tech needs to go hand in hand with high-touch, and why enterprise transformation efforts must be people-led, even if they are technology-driven.

6. We are preparing our students and our workers to be ready for such a digitally connected and technologically enhanced environment. What SHATEC has been doing is a very

commendable effort. Since the introduction of the SkillsFuture Study Awards in October 2015, SHATEC has curated a series of part-time diploma programmes in areas such as culinary skills, hotel and accommodation services, as well as food and beverage management. These programmes are aimed at developing emerging skills needed by the hospitality workforce. I am delighted to know that 16 out of 36 mid-career Singaporeans receiving their diplomas today are recipients of the SkillsFuture Study Awards. I urge everyone to embrace continual learning as a lifelong endeavour. Learning should not stop just because you have left school. Learning and skills upgrading is a journey that must continue for life.

HARNESSING THE VALUE OF A DIVERSE WORKFORCE

7. As the sector continues to transform, our workforce must also evolve to harness and recognise a diverse range of talents. The hospitality industry has started on this journey and is doing well in this area. The Hotel Careers Campaign aims to create awareness of the wide range of careers and progression opportunities in this industry. At the same time, we know there is scope for us to go even further, and we can achieve this if we work together. This year's campaign is appropriately themed "Open to All". In line with this, a film jointly produced by the Singapore Tourism Board, the Singapore Hotel Association and

the Food, Drinks & Allied Workers Union – a wonderful example of a tripartite partnership - will be launched next month to celebrate the achievements of hotel employees from different backgrounds, and to show how working in hotels has made a difference in their lives. I encourage all of you to watch this film when it is released in December.

8. As part of this campaign, I am pleased to announce that the Singapore Tourism Board and the Singapore Hotel Association are partnering SHATEC and SG Enable to prepare more hotels for inclusive hiring, and to provide more opportunities for persons with disabilities to be part of our hotel industry. Under this initiative, SG Enable and SHATEC will support the efforts of hotels to build their capabilities on job redesign and having inclusive workplace practices. SHATEC will provide two months of training, while SG Enable will work with hotels to offer nine-month-long hotel internship opportunities for graduates from special education schools, with the aim of securing employment for them. Job coaches from SG Enable will also be on-site to ensure that trainees are equipped with the necessary skills to support their learning journey. I am very cheered by this initiative to build an inclusive hotel industry, and I want to thank all our partners for coming together to make this happen. This requires a whole-of-nation approach - Government, employers, community partners and the labour movement all coming

together to make this happen. It will allow our companies to meet part of their manpower needs in a tight labour market, while contributing to a positive social outcome.

9. Today, we also recognise the contributions of SHATEC's alumni as industry role models. One of the SHINE Outstanding Alumni nominees today is Mr Derrick Ang, Deputy General Manager of ASTONS Food and Beverage Specialities. Derrick exemplifies a spirit of openness to people from diverse backgrounds. During an employers' appreciation event organised by the Association of People with Special Needs (APSN), Derrick had the opportunity to interact with some of the students. He was impressed by their capabilities and resilience. When he learnt that APSN had a café space, he conceived the idea of setting up a training café there. This led to the birth of APSN Café for All & Astons Express. Derrick's initiative to work with APSN won his organisation the Best Corporate Social Responsibility Initiative by QSR Media Asia Conference and Awards last year. Well done Derrick! I hope Derrick's example will inspire many others to similarly support and adopt inclusive hiring and workplace practices in the hospitality industry. We want our companies to do well, but we also want to help our companies do good for the society. So we should not only contribute to the companies' bottom line, but also aim for a positive social outcome.

MENTORSHIP AS KEY TO TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND RETENTION

10. Besides embracing diversity, it is also important to nurture talent within the workplace, as much of the learning takes place on the job. The Industry Mentorship Programme @SHATEC was launched four years ago, and pairs trainees with industry mentors to receive career coaching. Ms Jamie Lim, a graduate from the Diploma in Culinary Skills, was among the hundreds of mentees who took part in the programme in 2017. She was paired with Chef Robert Stirrup, Director of Culinary Operations of Fairmont Singapore and Swissôtel The Stamford.

11. During the mentorship, Chef Robert developed Jamie's interest in fine dining and gave her opportunities to visit restaurants under his supervision. After the mentorship ended, Jamie decided to serve her industrial attachment with the Equinox restaurant at Swissôtel The Stamford, to continue learning under Chef Robert. At the end of her attachment, she was offered a full-time position with Equinox restaurant. I wish Jamie all the best in her career and hope that one day, she will also be in a position like Chef Robert, to mentor and inspire another young person.

12. For his dedication, Chef Robert has been nominated for the SHINE Industry Mentor Award this year. Today, I am delighted to congratulate the 15 mentors who have been nominated for this award. A big thank you to all our mentors who have stepped up to groom the next generation of leaders! We hope more hoteliers and industry leaders will come on board this meaningful programme, and we look forward to hearing more success stories in time to come.

CONCLUSION

13. In closing, I would like to encourage all our graduates to value the lessons that you have learnt from your teachers and mentors, emulate the strengths of your seniors, and continually learn and upgrade your skills to seize the opportunities ahead. There will be many opportunities created as we grow our economy and attract investments. In fact, some of the hotels that you are going to work for will also have opportunities for overseas exposure. Hoteliers are very keen to expose their employees to overseas postings, so that they can gain a regional perspective of working in a different setting, culture and society. If these opportunities do come your way, please seize them and develop your careers through such experiences and exposures. Your education at SHATEC has put you in a good starting position in the hospitality industry, but how far you go from here

depends on your subsequent hard work, dedication and resourcefulness.

14. Once again, my heartiest congratulations to all our graduands. I wish you all the very best in your future endeavours, and may your passion be made possible as you progress in your careers!

15. Thank you.