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**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR PETER HO,  
HEAD, CIVIL SERVICE,  
AT THE 20<sup>TH</sup> ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE DINNER  
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 19 MARCH 2008 AT 7.30 PM  
AT GRAND COPTHORNE WATERFRONT HOTEL**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs

Ministers

Chairman Public Service Commission,

Public Service Commission Members,

Colleagues, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. This is the 20<sup>th</sup> year we are holding the Administrative Service Dinner and Promotion Ceremony, an annual event that marks significant career milestones of our Administrative Officers. It is also an important occasion for us to reflect on our roles in the Public Service and to renew our commitment to the Service and to Singapore. This evening, we are privileged to have Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs, Mr Wong Kan Seng, to grace this occasion as our Guest-of-Honour.

2. I am happy to see some of our former colleagues joining us this evening. I would also like to welcome colleagues from the various statutory boards and government departments who are holding Public Service Leadership appointments.

### **STATE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE**

3. First, an update on the state of the Administrative Service and the Management Associates Programme. There are now 421 Administrative Officers and Management Associates (as at 31 Dec 2007). This is an 8.8% increase from last year. Of this, 237 are Administrative Officers, including 34 officers in the SAF. 184 are Management Associates including those in the SAF. Over the last year, 90 officers have been appointed either as Administrative Officers or Management Associates. During the same period, 18 left the Administrative Service and 20, the Management Associates Programme.

4. The majority of our officers serve in the Ministries in various capacities. To broaden the exposure of our officers, we have 30 officers serving in statutory boards, and one in the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. One officer is on secondment with the Lee Kuan Yew School of

Public Policy, another with the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) and a third recently completed his secondment with McKinsey. One Management Associate scholar is currently spending his Gap year in Morgan Stanley, Singapore, prior to starting work in the Service.

5. The Service continues to emphasise training and development to equip our officers to take on higher responsibilities and roles. 62 Management Associates completed the Foundation Course last year, and 30 Administrative Officers participated in the Senior Management Programme. Four officers are currently pursuing postgraduate studies in management and business administration abroad and in Singapore. Three officers completed their Advanced Management Programme last year and another officer will be embarking on his programme shortly.

#### **PREPARING AOS FOR THE GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT**

6. The Administrative Service is challenged to keep pace with a rapidly changing and globalised world. In the past year, PSD has pushed on with initiatives to give our officers an international outlook and to prepare them to operate in a dynamic and fluid environment. I will highlight three key areas – raising language proficiency, developing depth and specialist expertise and deployment outside of the mainstream.

## **RAISING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCIES**

7. Singapore's location at the heart of Southeast Asia requires our officers to be proficient in conversational Malay. The rise of China means that our officers must have Mandarin in order to engage and establish good relations with our foreign counterparts from these regions. To help raise our officers' language proficiency, PSD introduced a 1-on-1 tutoring programme in conversational Malay and Mandarin for the Permanent Secretaries in November 2007. Three Permanent Secretaries are already taking tuition. We expect more to come on board when the programme is extended to Administrative Officers who are holding Deputy Secretary and Chief Executive Officer positions.

8. For the other Administrative Officers and Management Associates, PSD will work with the Civil Service College to run language classes in conversational Malay and Mandarin tailoring to their needs. I would encourage all officers to consider participating.

## **DEVELOPING DEPTH AND SPECIALIST EXPERTISE**

9. Currently, we expect Administrative Officers to acquire knowledge and experience on a broad range of issues as a means to prepare them to eventually hold Public Service Leadership appointments. The emphasis is on breadth of experience, the ability to lead in various domains, rather than

on acquiring specialist knowledge within a single domain. The increasing complexity in the business of government, however, has led to a growing need for the Service to consider developing officers with specialist knowledge. Having Administrative Officers who have in-depth knowledge of their policy domain areas would enable them to better appreciate the issues, and their complexities. It will also help them to engage and relate to their professional scheme counterparts in working through policy options and solutions.

10. In view of this, the Service is prepared to sponsor officers for post-graduate degrees at the doctorate and masters level in specific areas relevant to the business of government. PSD will extend the post-graduate scholarship training awards to include doctorate awards and masters programmes in specialised areas other than public policy and general management. This ensures the development of a cadre of officers who hold specialist expertise in critical domain areas, for example, risk management, economics and international relations, among others.

### **DEPLOYMENT OUTSIDE MAINSTREAM SERVICE**

11. Our officers must have the confidence to engage and work with their foreign counterparts, whether it is in a trade negotiation, sharing Singapore's development experience or exporting our public sector capabilities. We will

leverage on more opportunities to send our officers for international attachments as these will serve to develop an international mindset in our officers and allow them to acquire international experience. Through the experience, we hope they will be more nimble and adaptable in leading and working in various work environments and across different cultures. It allows them to network with their foreign counterparts and in the process, help to develop Singapore's premier branding and expand our country's international space.

12. This year, we will send one officer to work in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, and two officers to the eco-city project in Tianjin. We also have one officer attached to IESingapore working in China. We will continue to send officers to other platforms such as the United Nations General Assembly. Last year, we established with the Hong Kong Civil Service a mutual exchange programme for Administrative Officers. It proved to be a valuable learning experience for both sides. We will continue with the programme and explore other similar opportunities with other civil administrations. Such exchange programmes give our officers exposure to how other civil services function and operate.

13. I mentioned last year that our long term target is to have more than 20% of our officers working outside the ministries at any point in time. Currently, 14% of our officers are deployed outside the civil service. We expect to increase this to 17% by the end of this year.

14. Administrative Officers should make the best use of these attachments, learn from their experiences, and share it with the rest of the Service on their return. These collective experiences will serve the Service well.

#### **PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS**

15. I am happy to report that 79 officers will be promoted this year – 46 within the Timescale grades, 10 to become Superscale officers and 23 within the Superscale grades. I offer my congratulations to all who are promoted and wish you all the best as you take on new challenges and more demanding responsibilities.

16. It is now my honour to invite our Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Home Affairs to address us.

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