

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR PETER HO,
HEAD, CIVIL SERVICE,
AT THE 2009 ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE DINNER AND
PROMOTION CEREMONY
MONDAY, 30 MARCH 2009 AT 7.50 PM
AT THE MARRIOTT HOTEL**

Prof S Jayakumar, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security

Ministers

Chairman, Public Service Commission,

Public Service Commission Members,

Colleagues,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. This is the 21st year of the Administrative Service Dinner and Promotion Ceremony. It is an annual event that marks significant career milestones of our Administrative Officers. It is also an occasion for us to reflect on our roles in the Public Service, and to renew our commitment to the Service and to Singapore.

2. This evening, we welcome Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security, Prof S Jayakumar, as our Guest-of-Honour.

3. 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

4. First, let me give an update on the state of the Administrative Service and the Management Associates Programme. As at 31 December 2008, there were 247 Administrative Officers and 208 Management Associates, or 455 in total. Over the last year, 82 officers were appointed either as Administrative Officers or Management Associates. During the same period, 9 left the Administrative Service, and 20, the Management Associates Programme. All in all, we have a net increase of 8% or 34 more officers, due largely to more Management Associates.

5. The majority of our officers serve in the Ministries. But for the last two years, it has been our policy to post more officers out of the Ministries to broaden their exposure. The aim is to deploy up to 20% this way. Today, close to 16% of Administrative Officers serve outside of the Civil Service. They are seconded to Statutory Boards, Community Development Councils, NTUC, and to private companies like Shell. To give our officers more international experience, we have also deployed a number of officers

overseas, to various Singapore embassies, to the Tianjin Eco-City Project, and to the IE Singapore office in China. 4 Management Associates are currently spending their Gap year in the people and private sectors.

6. The Service emphasises training and development to prepare our officers for higher responsibilities. A total of 108 Administrative Officers and Management Associates completed various milestone programmes run by the Civil Service College last year. These included the Foundation Course, Senior Management Programme and Leaders in Administration Programme. A new milestone programme that targets newly-appointed Administrative Officers was launched last year. The Leadership Development Programme is a bridge between the Foundation Course and the Senior Management Programme. It helps young Administrative Officers to develop an understanding of self, cultivate the ability to develop others, build teams and to drive change. The 20 officers who attended the inaugural programme found it very useful.

7. At the end of 2008, three Administrative Officers were pursuing postgraduate studies in management, while 1 officer had completed his local postgraduate studies in business. Five officers completed either the

Executive Development Programme or the Advanced Management Programme abroad last year.

8. In this globalised world, it is important that our officers have an international outlook and develop the confidence to operate overseas. We are working towards posting more officers to international attachments or to jobs with a strong international orientation. Apart from these, we are systematically looking for opportunities for our officers to network with their counterparts from other civil services through various regular exchange programmes with our ASEAN neighbours such as Brunei, Malaysia and Thailand.

SEIZING OPPORTUNITIES

9. During this economic downturn, the Government is taking the opportunity to bring in talent to enhance its ability to deliver quality service in areas such as education, healthcare and security. The Minister for Finance announced in the Budget Speech in January that 18,000 public sector jobs would be made available in the next two years.

10. In tandem, the Public Service Division, or PSD, is stepping up efforts to target and recruit Singaporeans, both locally and overseas, for the Administrative Service and Management Associate Programme. PSD has

introduced programmes for undergraduates like the Public Policy Challenge and the Public Policy Seminar to give them insights into what a career in the Civil Service entails.

11. The response to these efforts has been encouraging. PSD has seen a large increase in the number of applications for the Management Associates Programme in the first two months of 2009. Last year, 6 Management Associates were recruited directly from the open-market, compared to 1-2 officers in the past.

BUILDING CAPABILITIES

12. We need new skills to operate in this globalised world. We announced last year that we are building Malay and Chinese Language capabilities in the Service. Since then, PSD has introduced a 1-on-1 tutoring programme for Public Service Leaders, as well as the Basic Conversational Malay course for officers. Next month, the first Business Mandarin course will be run. I am happy to note that the response to these courses has been very good.

13. Economics is an essential foundation for effective policy-making. The Centre for Public Economics is a new centre under the Civil Service College that was set up in collaboration with the Ministry of Trade and

Industry to advance economics thinking and analysis in public policy. This year, the Centre launched its “Economics for Policymakers Programme” for public officers with about three to six years of work experience. The course aims to help public officers appreciate the economic principles that underpin Singapore’s policies, and expose them to the wider theoretical and thought leadership in the various policy domains.

CONTRIBUTING TO THE COMMUNITY

14. During the current economic downturn when Singaporeans are struggling to cope, it is even more important that our officers are sensitive to ground issues and concerns. For Administrative Officers to be effective in policy development and planning, they must be able to empathise with the difficulties that Singaporeans experience. Otherwise, the Government will lose credibility and become less nimble in responding to the needs of citizens.

15. Under the Community Attachment Programme, officers are attached to the grassroots organisations to contribute to the community while at the same time, getting a first-hand experience of socio-economic conditions on the ground. Officers who have gone through this Programme have found it a realistic, enlightening and enriching experience. Last year, 9 Administrative

Officers were on the Programme. This year, 15 officers are slated to take part in the Programme.

16. Since 2007, PSD has been running a Community Involvement Programme. This programme is an avenue for Administrative Officers from the middle and senior levels to volunteer to serve on the boards of Non-Profit organisations and school advisory committees of neighbourhood schools. It allows officers to contribute their knowledge and experience to these organisations, and in turn understand the challenges facing society at the ground level. To date, PSD has successfully placed 19 officers on such boards and committees.

PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

17. I am happy to report that 63 officers will be promoted this year – 31 within the Timescale grades, 7 to join the Superscale grade, and 25 within the Superscale grades. I offer my congratulations to all who are promoted, and I wish you all the best as you take on new challenges and more demanding responsibilities.

18. It is now my honour to invite our Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security to address us.