

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR PETER ONG, HEAD, CIVIL SERVICE,
AT 2011 ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE DINNER AND PROMOTION CEREMONY
28 MAR 2011 (MONDAY), 7.50PM
AT THE PAN PACIFIC HOTEL**

Our Guest-of-Honour, Mr Wong Kan Seng, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for National Security

DPM Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Defence and Minister in-charge of the Civil Service

Ministers

Mr Eddie Teo, Chairman, Public Service Commission

Members of the Public Service Commission

Colleagues

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good evening and a warm welcome to the 23rd Administrative Service Dinner and Promotion Ceremony. Each year, we come together to mark career milestones of Administrative Officers. It is an important occasion for us to reflect on our roles in the Public Service, and to renew our commitment to serve Singapore.

2. This evening, we are privileged to have Deputy Prime Minister Wong as our Guest-of-Honour. I would also like to welcome our colleagues who are holding Public Service Leadership appointments in the statutory boards and government departments.

STATE OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE

3. Let me begin by giving an update on the state of the Administrative Service and its associated talent development programmes. As of 31st December 2010, there were 520 officers in the Administrative Service, the Management Associates Programme and the SAF Overseas Scholars Programme. This is an increase of 7% compared to the previous year. Of these, 277 were Administrative Officers, 201 were Management Associates and 42 were SAF Overseas Scholars.

4. Last year, 26 officers were appointed to the Administrative Service and 69 officers were appointed to the Management Associates Programme and SAF Overseas Scholars Programme. Among the Management Associates appointed, 11 were recruited from the open market and 6 were in-service officers who were nominated by their Ministries. We will continue our efforts to expand and diversify our talent pool beyond scholarship holders. In terms of the outflow in 2010, 14 officers left the Administrative Service and 22 officers either resigned or withdrew from the Management Associates Programme.

5. The majority of our officers serve in the various Ministries. We also deploy Administrative Officers outside the Ministries to broaden their exposure and provide them with diverse perspectives. Our long-term target is to have 20% of Administrative Officers working outside the Ministries at any point in time. As of 31st December 2010, 15% of Administrative Officers were deployed to statutory boards, Community Development Councils, NTUC, the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, and private sector companies such as Shell and Temasek Holdings. To give our officers more international exposure, we have also deployed a number of officers overseas, such as to Singapore embassies and the Tianjin Eco-city Project. In 2010, we attached an Administrative Officer to the World Bank. In addition, two Management Associates spent their Gap Year with Organica Ecotechnologies in Hungary and Keppel FELS Limited in Singapore. We are actively working with a range of organisations to open up more external secondment opportunities for our officers.

6. The Administrative Service invests significantly in the training and development of its officers. Last year, 111 Administrative Officers and Management Associates participated in milestone programmes run by the Civil Service College. These included the BEACON programme, the Foundation Course, the Leadership Development Programme, the Senior Management Programme and the Leaders in Administration Programme. In addition, close to 100 Administrative Officers from all levels contributed their time, knowledge and experience to the Civil Service College through teaching and coaching. I would like to acknowledge and thank them for their contributions, which is testament to the willingness of Administrative Officers to share their experience and expertise.

7. In 2010, 6 Administrative Officers were sponsored for postgraduate studies, including one officer who is pursuing a PhD in micro-economics. One Administrative Officer went on an overseas Executive Development Programme and one attended an Advanced Management Programme. We aim to sponsor Administrative Officers to a wider range of institutions and programmes. This will bring to the Service a greater diversity of experiences and networks. I would like to encourage Administrative Officers to also consider programmes beyond the traditional courses and schools.

LOOKING AHEAD IN 2011

8. In 2010, Singapore's economy recovered strongly. At home, this recovery came amidst rising concerns of inflationary pressures and a widening income divide. Externally, the global situation remains challenging with uncertainties created by political and natural calamities as we have seen in the Middle East and Japan. There will be many more new challenges that we will face in the future and as the core of leadership in the Public Service, the Administrative Service needs to constantly reflect on and review its role.

LEADERSHIP IN A COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT

9. Administrative Officers are expected to lead and guide other public officers, run organisations and manage resources. We must lead by example and set the tone by exemplifying the public service ethos and values. In the Public Service, we need foresight and strategic vision to anticipate future challenges, assess risks, set the direction and prepare for what is to come. We must remain focused on the longer term interests of Singapore and Singaporeans, even as we seek to solve immediate problems that we face. In recent years, we have put in place the systems, networks and processes to clarify our long-term view of opportunities and challenges. We must build on these systems and structures by developing the right instincts about the path to take, and how to deliver the desired results even when all the facts and information are not available. Thereafter, there is the challenge of communicating the rationale of our policy choices to ensure buy-in from our stakeholders.

10. This is why we continue to emphasise the need to stay connected to the ground. Our policy prescriptions and our understanding of the implementation challenges will then be rooted in what is practical and relevant. As public officers, we must always have a sense of reality and have empathy for the issues affecting Singaporeans. And one way we hope to imbue this appreciation of ground issues and dynamics is through more operational postings and grassroots attachments.

11. Last year, 17 Administrative Officers participated in the Community Attachment Programme, where they were attached to grassroots organisations for a 6-month period. From this year, we will extend the Community Attachment Programme beyond the Administrative Service to Management Associates and other high potential officers in the public service. All Foundation Course participants will now participate in a Community Attachment Programme with community-based organisations such as the Community Development Councils and work on projects which will give them a good feel for ground concerns.

12. We are also exploring short term operational postings of a few months for all Management Associates before they are deployed to work in ministries. Currently, PSD posts AOs to a range of functional areas throughout their career. The assignments comprise a good mix of policy development and implementation, and staff and operational work. An operational experience is essential for all-round development of AOs as it will provide them with a better understanding of ground constraints and issues.

13. Our efforts to equip our officers with individual competencies must in turn translate into organisational capabilities which get embedded in strong institutions. We must lead and develop dynamic institutions which capture relevant organisational capabilities that will not only outlast the tenure of individual leaders, but also contribute to our resilience as a system to external shocks.

14. Leadership is a key governance principle and the public sector has invested much resources to develop leaders. Today we have a strong *corps* of public sector leaders. To operate effectively as a networked government, we also need to consider how to develop leadership as a distributed capability, where every officer up and down the organisation is a leader in his or her right, guided by

core Public Service values and empowered and supported by strong institutions and systems. As public sector leaders, that should be our aspiration.

PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS

15. I am happy to report that 63 officers will be promoted this year – 34 within the Timescale grades, 8 to the Superscale grade, and 21 within the Superscale grades. 28 officers will be receiving their Certificate of Appointment to the Administrative Service. I offer my congratulations to these officers and wish you all the best as you take on new challenges and more demanding responsibilities.

16. It is now my honour to invite Deputy Prime Minister Wong to address us.

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