

**OPENING ADDRESS BY MR PETER HO,  
HEAD, CIVIL SERVICE,  
AT THE 19<sup>th</sup> ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE DINNER  
HELD ON THURSDAY, 22 MARCH 2007 AT 7.50 PM  
AT THE MANDARIN BALLROOM, MERITUS MANDARIN**

Prime Minister

Senior Minister

Ministers

Chairman Public Service Commission,

Public Service Commission Members,

Colleagues, Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Welcome to the 19<sup>th</sup> Administrative Service Dinner and Promotion Ceremony. This annual event marks significant career milestones for our Administrative Officers. It is 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.

2. This evening, we are privileged to have Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to grace this occasion as our Guest-of-Honour.

3. I am happy to see some of our retired Permanent Secretaries 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**

4. Let me first give an update on the state of the Administrative Service. There are now 387 Administrative Officers and Management Associates. This is a 7% increase from last year. Of this, 230 are Administrative Officers, including 36 officers in the SAF. 157 are Dual Career Officers and Management Associates. Over the last year, 62 officers were appointed either as Administrative Officers or Management Associates. Over the same period, 21 left the Administrative Service for various reasons - 7 retired, 13 resigned, 1 transferred to another scheme, while 14 left the Dual Career Scheme or Management Associates Programme.

5. The majority of our officers are serving in Ministries in various capacities. To widen and diversify the experiences and perspectives of Administrative Officers, we have 19 officers serving in statutory boards and 1 in the Singapore Cooperation Enterprise. 2 officers are on attachment with private sector companies – McKinsey and SingHealth. 5 Management Associate scholars are currently spending their Gap year in private sector companies before starting work in the Service. 2 are attached to organisations in Singapore, 1 is in China while 2 are in the USA.

6. The Service continues to emphasise training and development to equip our officers to take on higher responsibilities. 39 Management Associates completed the Foundation Course last year, 10 Administrative Officers participated in the Senior Management Programme and 11 in the Leaders in Administration Programme. 6 Administrative Officers are currently pursuing postgraduate studies in public policy or business administration in various countries - China, the US, UK and Norway.

### **ATTRACTING TALENT**

7. For the Administrative Service to ensure that there is a pipeline of public service leaders, it must continue to draw in the best talent to enlarge and refresh its talent pool, both from outside and from within the public sector. We must continue to inject diversity into the Service by bringing in people with different backgrounds. For example, among the recent mid-career entrants into the Administrative Service, we have drawn in officers from the Legal Service as well as statutory boards like IDA and EDB.

8. Besides undergraduate scholarships, we have also stepped up efforts to tap other sources of potential recruits. The Public Service Division has introduced internship programmes, mid-term scholarships and green-harvesting initiatives to attract graduating students from reputable universities to join the Management Associates Programme. 3 Management Associates have been

appointed through these efforts last year and we have seen an increase in the number of applicants in the recent round of recruitment exercise. We have also continued to identify and invite promising in-service officers from within the Public Sector to join the Management Associates Programme and Administrative Service.

### **RECOGNISING GREATER RESPONSIBILITIES**

9. As Singapore's external environment becomes more competitive and more complex, our agencies face many new challenges and demands. Several ministries have seen their workload grow enormously in recent years. Ministries like MOE, MFA and MINDEF need two Permanent Secretaries to shoulder the load. In recent years, many of our Permanent Secretaries and CEOs have seen a significant expansion in their scope of responsibility, as well as in the size and complexity of their jobs. We have to ensure that our reward and recognition system keeps pace with the increased job responsibilities. In this regard, we will be reviewing the job grades of Permanent Secretaries and adjusting those whose functions have increased in recent years. This will not be confined only to Permanent Secretaries. Outstanding officers at all levels who take on bigger jobs and do them well should be properly recognised and advanced.

## **DEPLOYMENT OUTSIDE OF MAINSTREAM SERVICE**

10. We will continue to develop officers with strong leadership qualities. While their intellectual abilities must be the baseline, we will also emphasise their ability to function in an uncertain environment, to lead organisations and to work with people. We will re-jig the development of Administrative Officers to prepare them for the new challenges of a globalised, fast-changing world. We will be more deliberate in giving our officers the experience of leading and working in various contexts – in policy, in operations and in front-line work. Administrative Officers must acquire an appreciation of our customers' concerns, be it businesses or the man on the street. They must develop the confidence to operate in a globalised environment and to adapt to unfamiliar settings.

11. To this end, we will intensify efforts to deploy more Administrative Officers to a greater diversity of jobs. Currently, 12% of our officers are working outside of the ministries. Our target is to increase this to 15% by the end of this year and to more than 20% thereafter. We will post more officers to the front-line statutory boards, to think tanks, to organisations such as NTUC and to private sector organisations. We will also work towards giving our officers more international exposure. MFA has already opened up its missions for officers from other ministries to do studies and projects overseas for their

ministries. More agencies are now engaged in exporting our public sector expertise.

12. The Civil Service College will be developed into a focal point for the transformation of the public service to meet future challenges. The College will prepare public officers, particularly those in the Administrative Service, not just to be excellent policy-makers and implementers, but also strong leaders. It will also expand beyond its traditional role in running training programmes - to conduct research, codify our governance philosophies, document best practices, and contribute new thinking and diverse perspectives to the public service. As part of this effort, it has recently set up a centre of excellence in governance and leadership.

13. The Administrative Service is the top echelon of the Civil Service. It is a premier service with many opportunities. The premier terms are necessary as the business of government is demanding. However, these terms also come with more stringent requirements, greater accountabilities and responsibilities. In this fast-changing world, we need Administrative Officers who think ahead, who are bold in vision and effective in execution. Above all, they must be strong leaders, leaders who are able to look at issues not just from the perspective of their agencies, but also from the higher whole-of-government vantage point. Administrative officers must embody the spirit of public service

and champion the public service ethos - with a sense of commitment and service.

**PROMOTION OF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS**

14. I am happy to report that 55 officers will be promoted this year - 23 within the Timescale grades, 10 to become Superscale officers and 22 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.

15. It is now my honour to invite our Prime Minister to address us.

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