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SPEECH BY MR YATIMAN YUSOF, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MINISTRY OF INFORMATION AND THE ARTS AT THE OPENING OF THE PROGRAMME ON "PLANNING LIBRARY SERVICES FOR THE NEW MILLENNIUM" ON 22 MARCH 99 AT 0900 HOURS AT THE

PLAZA PARK ROYAL HOTEL

Good morning, our friends from ASEAN,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today to open this programme on Planning Library Services for the New Millennium, organised by the National Library Board and sponsored by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs under the Singapore Cooperation Programme.

This programme marks a significant milestone for the national libraries of ASEAN to foster closer cooperation in planning for library services through sharing of knowledge and experience. I have no doubt this will lead to mutual learning and cooperation.

Library services in Singapore have undergone rapid transformation in the last few years. In 1992, a Library 2000 Review Committee was appointed by the Minister for Information and the Arts to undertake a comprehensive review of library services in Singapore, and to recommend how libraries could serve Singaporeans better in the coming decade. The Committee submitted its report in 1994 and its recommendations were accepted by the Minister.

The National Library Board was formed in 1995 to implement the recommendations. I understand you are given a copy of the Report as a reference for your deliberations. I will not elaborate on the recommendations here.

The public libraries in Singapore has been moving from the traditional concept of book-based and on site service to one that offers multimedia materials and services that go beyond the walls of the physical library. This concept of a borderless and virtual library is fast becoming the norm for libraries in the next millennium. Libraries around the world recognise the need for a faster flow of information and the importance of information technology in contributing to the reality of borderless libraries. This has led to a radical change in the way libraries deliver its services. The advent of IT has brought about massive information overload and also accelerated the pace of information becoming obsolete. In order to deal effectively with these changes, library professionals must catch up with new technology and understand its potentials.

The value of this forum is that participants from the different countries can share their views and together find innovative ways to exploit IT to deliver convenient, timely and useful services to its customers.

With limited resources and the growing demands of library users in the new millennium, more and more libraries, not just those in the developing countries but also developed countries, recognised the need for libraries to cooperate and share resources and expertise to complement each other's strengths. I hope this is an area which library professionals in ASEAN could address. I believe there are a lot that we could explore for our collective benefits.

Credit must go to the team from the NLB and Singapore's Ministry of Foreign Affairs in organising this programme. It covers lectures, presentations, sharing of experience and knowledge and visits to libraries for a first-hand experience on how the Singapore public libraries are using information technology to improve existing services and to introduce new ones.

## National Archives of Singapore

I hope this programme is but the first step in a series of interactions among ASEAN library professionals. I am confident that ASEAN library professionals will find every opportunity to continue this beneficial exchange of knowledge and explore possible collaborations.

And now, in declaring the training programme open, I would like to wish all participants a fruitful time during the one-week programme.

Thank you.