

To:  
cc: (bcc: NHB NASReg/NHB/SINGOV)  
Subject: (Embargoed) Speech by Mr Othman Haron Eusofe, 26 Apr 2000, 8.00pm

# *Singapore Government*

## ***MEDIA RELEASE***

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, 140 Hill Street #02-02 MITA Building  
Singapore 179369. Tel: 837 9666

---

### **EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS**

The attached press release/speech is **EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY**.  
Please check against delivery.  
For assistance call 837 9666

---

**SPRInter 4.0**, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:  
<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

---

4

***To be embargoed until delivery***

**ADDRESS BY MR OTHMAN HARON EUSOFE  
MINISTER OF STATE FOR MANPOWER  
AT PROFESSIONAL SECRETARIES DAY DINNER  
ON WEDNESDAY, 26 APR 2000 AT 8 PM  
AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL**

National Archives of Singapore

Ms Pang Yit Ping,  
President of the Singapore Association of Personal and Executive Secretaries  
(SAPES),

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I would like to first thank you for your kind invitation to me to join you in this Dinner to celebrate the Professional Secretaries Week.

### **The New Economy**

2. Rapid technological advances and globalisation are forcing us to make

urgent changes in the way we organise ourselves so as to remain relevant. These changes will have a profound impact on the way we work and manage our daily lives. New technologies, business models and relationships are created everyday. Businesses are constantly restructuring themselves to stay competitive and traditional ways of doing things are changing at breakneck speeds. Hence we have to develop in our workers the capacity as well as the confidence to keep pace with these changes so that they can remain employable.

3. We are moving quickly from the Old Economy into a New Economy which will be knowledge based. What is the New Economy? Mr Chris Meyer, author of *Blur: the Speed of Change in the Connected Economy*, described the New Economy as a “Blur”. Things are changing so quickly and unpredictably that reaction is becoming increasingly more important than anticipation. The value of a company in the Old Economy is the assets it possesses like land, building, equipment and other tangible assets. In the New Economy the value of the company is in its employees’ skills and knowledge; their innovative capability, talent, creativity and other similar qualities which are intangible assets. Human resource or manpower development is therefore critical and our businesses must provide opportunities for their workers and motivate them as well, to develop their skills and talents on a continuous basis.
4. There are some key elements of the New Economy, which I would like to share with you tonight. They have been often stated, but we will need to remind ourselves over and over again lest we become complacent and irrelevant to the demands of the new workplace. With rapid technological changes and the production of new goods and services, our knowledge and skills will have a limited shelf life. The speed of change will be accelerated. We can no longer afford to depend on just adding value to what we are doing or providing, on an incremental basis. Instead the intensity of the competition will require us to undertake a total review of our management systems regulations and procedures. The word used to describe this requirement or demand for change is “creative destruction”. In these operating circumstances, our workers have to develop the ability to create value to remain competitive. In this new competitive environment, there is

no life time skills or life time employment. Instead, it calls for life-long learning for life-long employability. Even successful businesses have to constantly reorganise and restructure themselves to enhance their competitiveness. As a result some jobs will be shed but new ones will be created. Let me also add while there will be challenges there will also be new opportunities. As we prepare and gear ourselves by equipping ourselves with new and multi skills we can look for more rewarding employment opportunities. This however demands a mindset change to adapt to continuous learning and relearning.

### **The Changing Secretarial Profession**

5. What is the key challenge for the Secretarial Profession? I think the members of the Profession must be able to quickly adjust to the changes in their workplace. Even traditional core functions will require changes to meet new requirements, which will in turn require new skills to perform. IT skills in particular are essential in an increasingly digitised world. A key challenge for the SAPES is to anticipate the changes and development in the New Economy and to assist their members to gear up and confidently meet the demands of the new workplace. There may be opportunities for secretaries to take on a wider role in their organisations. I am told that some secretaries are already contributing in the areas of HR management and development, office administration and accounting. They also play an active role in the organising of conferences and seminars. Hence there will be an emergence of jobs requiring a wider spectrum of knowledge and skills and to be able to seize these opportunities, SAPES members have to quickly expand their range of skills and become multi skilled. To recapitulate in order to achieve the required skill set and to stay relevant in a fast-changing business environment, secretaries, like the rest of our workforce, should be strongly encouraged to urgently embrace lifelong learning.

### **Achieving Vision 2000 through Lifelong Learning**

6. SAPES has articulated in Vision 2000 that you want to see a strong recognition of the profession and secretaries' contributions in the business

world. Let me reiterate that lifelong learning will be critical to help SAPES realise Vision 2000. It will enable SAPES members to create new ways to contribute to your companies. This will make them highly valued employees.

### **SAPES' current efforts in Lifelong Learning**

7. I am pleased to learn that the SAPES is organising educational talks for members on a regular basis. It is apt that the topics covered are not the ones directly relevant to the secretarial profession, but also include those from other professional areas. This is a commendable initiative and I hope that your efforts to promote a culture of lifelong learning among your members will continue vigorously. A mindset that embraces lifelong learning will not only help your members become part of an able and adaptable workforce but will also enrich your members as individuals. I wish you all the best in this endeavour.

### **Conclusion**

8. I would like to end by congratulating the award winners, whose contributions and commitment to your organisation are being recognised tonight. You have done your profession proud and I am confident that you will continue to lead the profession to greater heights!

9. Thank you and have an enjoyable evening.