

SEMINAR ON FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN SINGAPORE

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1           The last decade has seen a tremendous growth both in the magnitude, diversification as well as in the sophistication of our financial institution. A good indicator is in the development of the banking system. In 1970 we had 35 banks with a total of 176 banking offices. Today the total number of banks of all categories has risen to 70 and there are no fewer than 235 banking offices including branches. Prior to 1970 the term "Merchant Banking" was foreign to Singapore. At the moment there are twenty merchant banks operating here. These, together with the development in the money markets, insurance, etc., are indicative of the rate of growth of our local financial industry.

2           Faced with such rapid progress we would do well to ask ourselves this question: can we sustain this rate of growth? Fortunately, the financial community is aware of the implications of this question. They are responsive to the fact that in order to maintain our efficiency and to sustain our growth the financial industry as a whole, must be quick to adapt to new developments in the international financial system as well as changes in our business environment, in particular, the changing needs and expectations of the customers.

3           There are various discernible developments:-

- 1) Banks and financial institutions are getting bigger and more complex than before. To manage these organisations, management skills must be developed at all levels of the organisation.
- 2) The business environment is becoming more competitive. Everyone must increase in efficiency in order to compete and stay in business.
- 3) The requirements of business expansion have attracted many to extend their operations beyond our national boundaries.
- 4) Increasing demands by clients have made many leading financial institutions undergo changes in internal organisation. They have added new departments such as: marketing, economic research, public relations, training and development, to their existing organisation structure.

4           The fact cannot be over-emphasised that in order to keep up with these trends we must constantly upgrade our pool of skilled manpower. Only then we can continue to offer an attractive array of services at an efficient level.

5           It is at this point that we can find much common grounds between our University and our business community. We must jointly put together our efforts to understand better the manpower requirements of the financial industry and to devise modern methods of developing people to run it.

6           One of the basic tasks of the University is to educate personnel that can be suitably placed in the world of business and banking. It is therefore important that both staff and students have a deeper understanding of the actual process and trends in the real world. During occasions such as these, our lecturers and students can learn at first hand the actual requirements and values that business expects of them.

7           To those from the banking and financial community, I am grateful for your continued support. I appreciate the special effort you have made to be present here. I am sure our staff and students can take advantage of your presence during this seminar. Your valuable ideas and experience should help them to prepare themselves for their future roles.