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SPEECH BY DR LEE BOON YANG, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (FINANCE  
AND HOME AFFAIRS) AT THE OPENING OF THE CIVIL SERVICE  
COMPUTERISATION PROGRAMME (CSCP) SEMINAR AT TANGLIN ROOM,  
SHANGRI-LA HOTEL ON FRIDAY, 30 AUGUST 1985 AT 9.00 AM

The Civil Service Computerisation Programme (CSCP) is a firm commitment by Government to use information technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public administration. In the past four years, good progress has been made in developing the basic infrastructure in terms of hardware, software, professional and end-user skills to implement the programme successfully. I am happy to note that ministries are beginning to derive benefits from the application systems that are being implemented progressively. It gives me great pleasure to be here this morning and to comment on such an important programme.

1985 has given us a rough shock. Singaporeans, after enjoying 20 years of steady and vigorous economic growth are suddenly feeling the impact of a general slow-down. The competitiveness of our industrial undertakings has been blunted. As a result we are losing out in the world market. A major effort to restructure is under way to regain vigour and competitiveness versus the NICs. We are confident that our efforts will result in Singapore emerging from this recession without suffering serious economic harm. On the contrary, the restructuring will enable us to compete more successfully as the global economy recovers.

The CSCP is of crucial national importance as we restructure our economy to face the immediate and longer term challenges ahead of us. We must become more efficient in every aspect of our use of manpower and other resources.

The Civil Service has to be more supple to respond swiftly to new demands and conditions brought about by the complex and changing economic pattern and social environment.

We must have a clear vision of the role that the public sector should play in supporting the restructured economy of the 1990s. The requirement for us to be more efficient, effective and flexible means that we must develop the capability to exploit fully the potential offered by information technology. The entire public service has to work together to seek innovative ways of organising and carrying out our functions. We must be capable of visualising and providing new opportunities to improve service to the public. We should aim for systematic improvements rather than piece-meal applications of computerisation to overcome local inefficiencies or problems.

The emphasis on more efficient use of manpower resource should not fuel fears of job losses or retrenchment. What it does mean is that existing manpower have to be retrained. Civil servants will have to cope with new job requirements or new areas of work and learn to perform new functions and services. Indeed, the fear of job losses would lead to apathy and resistance to the search for new solutions. A negative outlook would run counter to our ambition to use manpower more efficiently. A positive climate and culture should be nurtured to encourage every member of the workforce to maximise available opportunities for improvements. The public service must exploit the capabilities offered by available information technology to do things in a better, faster, more meaningful and economical manner.

Ministries together with the NCB have gained experience and confidence in managing their initial plans for computerisation and a few ministries are beginning to

consider second phase plans. Ministries and the NCB must jointly explore the most cost effective ways of using information technology in the civil service and to ensure the best returns as we enter into Phase II plans for computerisation.

It is now my pleasure to declare the CSCP Seminar open and I hope that each and every one of you will not only learn from this occasion but also enjoy the opportunity for an exchange of ideas and experiences.

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