

**SPEECH BY DR KER SIN TZE, MINISTER OF STATE,
MINISTRY OF INFORMATION & THE ARTS
ON THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
ASEAN ORAL HISTORY COLLOQUIUM ON 25 MAY 92**

Delegates and participants, ladies and gentlemen.

I have great pleasure to be here this morning to officially open the Asean Oral History Colloquium. This Colloquium is organised by the Oral History Department of Singapore under the Intra-Asean Cultural Programme and funded by the Asean Committee on Culture and Information.

On behalf of the Government and people of Singapore, I extend a warm welcome to all delegates and participants to this Colloquium. It is an honour for Singapore to host this Colloquium. I understand this is the second part of a Colloquium, the first of which was held successfully in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, last year.

I am happy to note that we have in this Colloquium various experts from academia, the archives, museums and

libraries who will share their experiences and expertise in oral history. We have also invited two internationally renowned oral historians, Professor Ronald Grele from the United States of America and Professor Paul Thompson from the United Kingdom. Their presence and contribution will undoubtedly enrich us intellectually.

The theme of this Colloquium is appropriately entitled "Recording our Asean Heritage". In Asean, we have a long history rooted in great cultural traditions. The recording of our past and cultural traditions is a matter of great urgency. Today we stand at the cross-roads of social change as we search for our historical identities and face challenges of the future. Oral history is a research methodology which enables us to document our past, to identify who we are and where we are heading.

In each of our Asean countries, oral history research is being conducted in the universities, museums and archives. It is a laudable effort. A colloquium like the one organised here

is a meeting of experts and practitioners. I hope meetings like this one would go beyond just exchanging ideas and experiences. Practical steps can be taken to enhance co-operation in the Asean spirit.

I understand that there will be a discussion on the feasibility of doing an oral history project on senior Asean statesmen. This is indeed an appropriate time for such a project as we reflect on the 25th anniversary of the founding of Asean. Over the years Asean has proven itself to be an effective political and economic forum. It has become a credible voice in international affairs and today Asean's collective views are much respected in the international community. Although Asean has grown from strength to strength, it had many teething problems in the beginning. An oral history project on the founding senior Asean statesmen will be a valuable record of how and why Asean came into being. Each member country can carry out its own interviews to document the rationale, perceptions and experiences which have collectively led us to the Asean of today.

There will be many benefits for such a collaborative project. The first obvious benefit will be to enable us to work together in the Asean spirit of co-operation and mutual understanding. The project will be a useful forum for us to share our ideas and expertise with each other. The different individual interviews done by each country will add up to become a valuable collective documentary record. This collective history of how and why Asean came into being will be useful for future generations of Asean statesmen and nationals wanting to find out about its background.

On this note, I declare open this Asean Oral History Colloquium.