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Subject: Speech by Mr Lee Ek Tieng, Head of Civil Service at the Opening of the 9th ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters(ACCSM) on Mon, 30 Jun 97 at 9.30 am

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SPEECH BY MR LEE EK TIENG, HEAD OF CIVIL SERVICE, SINGAPORE AT THE OPENING OF THE 9TH ASEAN CONFERENCE ON CIVIL SERVICE MATTERS ON MONDAY, 30 JUN 97 AT 9.30 AM AT THE REGENT HOTEL

Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the 9th ASEAN Conference on Civil Service Matters (ACCSM). It is indeed an honour for Singapore to host this Conference, an honour we last had 10 years ago. This year, in addition to ASEAN countries, we are pleased to have delegates from Laos and Myanmar, our friends from the ASEAN Secretariat, some of our ASEAN Dialogue Partners like Australia, Canada, India, Japan, New Zealand and Russia, and

Non-Governmental Organisations like APDC APDC: Asian and Pacific Development Centre, UNDP UNDP: United Nations Development Programme, IOG IOG: Institute of Governance and EROPA EROPA: Eastern Regional Organisation for Public Administration. I also want to bid our Vietnamese friends a special welcome since this is the first time they are attending the ACCSM.

ASEAN as a whole has been fortunate in enjoying strong economic growth in this decade. The future looks promising. A number of economists have labeled the next millennium the Pacific Century as there will be no lack of growth opportunities in this region. To take advantage of these opportunities, our Civil Services should help create the conditions for growth, thereby raising the living standards of our people.

I believe the ASEAN Civil Services are playing significant roles in creating the conditions conducive to raising living standards in our respective countries as they are all embarking on new public service initiatives. What is also encouraging is that these initiatives have come about not for reforms' sake, but because of the realisation that we need to anticipate the opportunities and changes ahead in the regional environment.

One key element that has changed in the economic environment is the growing expectations of the populace. The public expects to be treated like valued customers - and they should. Outdated ways of operating and serving the public must

make way for new modes of service delivery that will meet these expectations. The other key element that has changed the operating environment is technological advancements. Information Technology has enabled us to work a lot faster and more efficiently. Our Civil Services must therefore strive to harness the potential of technology more effectively to better serve the public.

With all these rapid changes, how do we ensure that our Civil Services would be prepared for the 21st Century? One way of achieving this is for our Civil Services to tap and build on the expertise and experiences of fellow ASEAN counterparts in the training and development of our people, and in harnessing the potential of technology. The ACCSM presents an excellent platform for maximising the synergies to be harnessed from within ASEAN as well as with friends of ASEAN, some of whom are at the Conference today. This is why the theme of this Conference is "ASEAN Civil Services: Sharing and Learning for the 21st Century". The intention is to reinforce the need to share and learn from each other as we embrace new challenges.

The ACCSM has long had a tradition of sharing ideas amongst its members through the various Country and Technical papers. In conferences like this, we can exchange new ideas with each other and pursue them further either through the ASEAN Resource Centres or on a bilateral basis. I understand that the various ASEAN Resource Centres have been very busy

since their inception at the 8th ACCSM. They have conducted seminars, conferences and workshops on Managing New Technologies, Information Exchange, Case Study Development, Examination, Creative Problem Solving Techniques, New Wave Leaders, and on Civil Service Reforms. The progress achieved by each Resource Centre in this short span of time is indeed very commendable.

As the host of this Conference, we in Singapore hope to share our ideas beyond our country and technical papers. We have put together a mini Exhibition on the Singapore Public Service in the room next to this. We hope that you will take some time after this opening ceremony to walk through it. We have also arranged for you during the course of the Conference to visit our Housing and Development Board, and the Central Provident Fund Board. I hope that you will find these visits useful learning journeys.

Finally, I would like to wish all of you a fruitful Conference and an enjoyable stay in Singapore. We hope that you will take time to also enjoy the sights of Singapore during your stay here.

It is now my pleasure to declare the Conference open.