

Singapore Government
PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR LEE KHOO CHOY, SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE (PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE) AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN OF PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AWARDS CEREMONY AT THE PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION AUDITORIUM ON 26 JUNE 1982 AT 11.00 AM

The effectiveness of an organisation depends on the quality of its staff. The People's Association has for several years been concerned with the quality of its officers. We want to see that the quality of PA's performance continues to improve. Yet we are aware that without high calibre officers, this is not possible. In the past few years, we have been plagued with problems of recruiting and retaining good calibre officers. This has to some extent adversely affected our performance. However, we are determined to overcome these problems.

We must have good calibre officers because the new-generation community centres of today are a far cry from those in the pioneering years. Comparable to some private clubs, our new centres offer a wide spectrum of up-to-date, sophisticated facilities ranging from squash courts to computers. With the proliferation of committees and sub-committees arising from the introduction of new activities and with the need to carefully scheduling these activities so as to maximise the usage of the available facilities, the running of new key centres has become much more complex. To manage these new-generation community centres, we need officers with initiative and enterprise. They must be imaginative and innovative. Above all, they must also have managerial skills. Gone are the days when centre staff needed only simple organising skills. Important though these organising skills still are, they are inadequate for running a modern centre. Our officers must be capable of managing the 101 things that make the centre tick.

It is therefore of paramount importance that the PA must have high calibre staff. The question is how to attract these people to PA, and how to retain them in PA?

We are fully aware that many of you have for some time been feeling unhappy and frustrated about the terms and conditions of employment in PA. And we are also aware that the salaries until now were not that attractive. But let me assure you that the Management has not been unconcerned about the welfare and morale of the staff.

Wherever we can, we would try to improve the working conditions of our staff. For instance, few months ago, we decided to close community centres on public holidays so as to enable our staff to spend time with their families. Likewise, we were fully aware that for many years the salary scales of our staff were not attractive. We tried several times to improve these salary scales but without success. It is only when statutory boards have been given the authority on personnel matters that we have finally succeeded in revising the salaries. Under the new scheme of service, not only the salaries have been raised, many promotional grades have also been created to provide more avenues of promotion for the competent and dedicated officers.

I want you to know that the Management has the welfare of the staff at heart, and will continue to look into ways and means of further improving the working conditions. We want to make PA a more conducive place of work: a place where you can work in comfort, a place where you can feel you are wanted, a place where you know that your hard work is recognised and appreciated. The Management would try to introduce more measures and activities to promote and encourage close rapport among the staff. We hope by the end of this year, we will form a number of Work Improvement Teams (WITs). We believe that through these WITs the staff will really get to know one another: the junior will get to know the senior, and vice-versa. This interaction between junior and senior officers would bring about a greater sense of identity with one another, leading to closer harmony among all staff.

With the marked improvement in the working conditions, with the revision and upgrading of salary scales, and with the creation of more promotion avenues, we expect our staff now to show greater drive and initiative. With improved salaries and better promotion prospects, we are now talent-scouting: officers with good potential will be identified and groomed for higher posts of responsibility.

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With our salary scales now comparable to those in the civil service and other statutory boards, it is now easier for us to attract good calibre candidates. Henceforth we will pay greater attention to the performance of our officers. We will no longer tolerate those who are sloppy in their work, those who show no drive and initiative, those who do not take their jobs seriously, and those who are irresponsible. We want our staff to strive for excellence. We want our officers to produce quality work. We want our HQ staff and centre staff to exercise initiative and drive. We want them to show innovation and imaginativeness in their work. In the civil service, those who cannot make the grade would lose out. It is therefore important that our officers adopt a right attitude towards work, without which they will find it difficult to work in PA.

The socio-economic scenario of the 1980s is vastly different from that of the 1960s and 1970s. The social problems are different from the yesteryears. The challenges are many and varied; our people are also more sophisticated. We therefore need officers who are imaginative and innovative, who can understand the problems, who are prepared to work hard, loyal and responsible, and who show enthusiasm, drive and initiative.

I am pleased to note that 83 officers are going to receive the ten years long-service awards, 117 fifteen years award, and five twenty years award. This is the first time we are giving long-service awards to officers who have worked with PA for ten years. Whether ten years, fifteen years or twenty years, we want to publicly recognise their devotion to duty and their loyalty to the PA. They have indeed set an excellent example for other staff to emulate. Loyalty, faithfulness and dedication are rare attributes, and I hope the new officers will acquire these virtues.

I am also pleased to note that 11 officers will receive the Staff Commendation Awards. They have been selected because of their dedication and devotion to duty. Here again, they have set a good example for others to follow.

PA Day is 1 July, and when we observe the PA Day, let's make a resolution to serve PA with loyalty and dedication.

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