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Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel: 3378191 ext. 352, 353, 354/3362207/3362271

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**SPEECH BY THE ACTING PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
SINGAPORE, DR YEOH GHIM SENG, AT THE OPENING OF
THE 14TH WORLD CONGRESS OF SAVINGS BANKS
AT THE SHANGRI-LA HOTEL ON TUESDAY, 3 APRIL '84 AT 9.30 AM**

May I extend a very warm welcome to all of you gathered here from all parts of the world, to this 14th World Congress of Savings Banks. We are pleased and proud to be the first Asian centre chosen for your triennial conference.

I would like to speculate that your choice of Singapore was dictated by:-

- (i) our strategic location in Asia and the excellent communications, accommodation and convention facilities available;
- (ii) the presence of some 150 banks in this, our small country, including of course our own dynamic POSB; and
- (iii) our strong mutual belief in the concept of thrift and individual saving.

The International Savings Banks Institute is an excellent example of unity in diversity. Notwithstanding your diverse backgrounds, you share the common purpose of mobilising untapped domestic savings for the public good. A commendable result is the inculcation of thrift and frugality, faster economic development, and restrained expectations in a world that has finite resources.

Singapore has been cultivating thrift as a National Virtue over the years and now has one of the highest rate of savings in the world. This was achieved through the compulsory savings in the Central Provident Fund and voluntary savings in the Post Office Savings Bank. Commercial banks and financial institutions have also played a very responsible role in increasing savings deposits. I have been told that for 1983, Singapore's gross national savings was a high 40 per cent of our gross national product.

Through your separate national efforts, you have all contributed to an improved global economy. Three years ago when you gathered in West Berlin for a similar meeting, the world was in the incipient stage of a long and bitter recession. National savings banks, together with international and national financial institutions, cooperated responsibly to gradually lift the world out of the doldrums.

Singapore is represented at this Congress by the Post Office Savings Bank (POSB). It is one of several hundred financial institutions in Singapore, but a unique organisation for this country. The POSB was established as part of the Postal Services Department in 1877. It was then the only bank open to those of modest means.

In 1972 it was constituted as a statutory authority in its own right, independent of the postal services department, although still maintaining outlets in many post offices. Its total deposits then were \$91.2 million. They are now \$6.5 billion, comprised of 2.5 million accounts, equivalent to the entire population of Singapore. The POSB is an important and indispensable component of our financial system, with many banking innovations to its credit.

May I congratulate the organizers for their efforts in gathering the delegates to exchange views on how the interests of the people and the Savings industry can be promoted. To the distinguished delegates, I wish all of you a very successful Congress and a pleasant stay in Singapore,
