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**SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM,
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER & MINISTER FOR DEFENCE
AND CHAIRMAN, SAFRA BOARD OF GOVERNORS,
AT THE SIXTH SAFRA AWARDS PRESENTATION
AT THE GRAND BALLROOM, RITZ-CARLTON HOTEL
HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22ND OCTOBER 1997 AT 7.45 PM**

The Singapore Armed Forces Recreation Association (SAFRA) was formed in July 1972. SAFRA had a humble beginning in the borrowed premises of the former Norwegian Seamen's Mission Home at Prince Edward Lane. With about 2,000 members at its formation, SAFRA then provided only basic facilities and few activities.

This year, SAFRA celebrates its 25th anniversary. SAFRA now has three clubhouses located at Toa Payoh, Bukit Merah and Tampines, a resort & country club complete with golf courses at the East Coast, a town club right in the heart of Orchard Road, holiday villas and apartments at Bintan and Batam, and two radio stations to cater to the needs and interests of SAFRA's 170,000 members and the National Servicemen (NSmen).

A wide range of popular sports and social and recreational activities are offered at SAFRA clubhouses. SAFRA also organises innovative mass-based events like Swing Singapore, Sheares Bridge Run, Rockwall Climbing and Runway Cycling, amongst others. SAFRA members can obtain benefits and privileges at various shopping outlets, recreation centres and cinema halls. SAFRA regularly

enjoys the support of more than 300 corporate bodies and 600 volunteers for its programmes and events. SAFRA has indeed come a long way and evolved into a thriving national institution.

The *raison d'être* for SAFRA remains that of promoting the spirit of camaraderie amongst NSmen. Figures for membership size, usage of clubhouse facilities, participation in activities, volunteer and corporate support indicate that SAFRA has done well. But beyond these numerical indications, SAFRA must prepare itself to meet the challenges of Singapore in the 21st Century.

At its present rate of membership growth, SAFRA's membership will soon surpass the 200,000 mark. With continued political stability and economic progress in Singapore, the level of affluence and sophistication amongst NSmen will rise. SAFRA members will become more mature. Their needs will change. Younger NSmen will have higher expectations, influenced by their increased exposure to sophisticated lifestyles, overseas travel and employment. The cost of servicing membership will escalate in parallel with manpower, infrastructural, maintenance and other related costs. SAFRA will be operating in an environment which will become increasingly competitive with private clubs, NTUC lifestyle centres and community clubs all offering attractive options to vie for the attention and participation of Singaporeans, many of whom are NSmen and their families. SAFRA will therefore have to review its strategic options on how to stay relevant and better serve, in a cost effective and efficient manner, its large and expanding membership.

I am pleased to note that SAFRA has taken active steps to build a 4th clubhouse in response to the recommendation of RECORD II. The clubhouse to cost \$35 million will be located on a 3-hectare plot within the Yishun Park. SAFRA is now working with the National Parks Board on the best way to integrate the clubhouse into the natural ambience of the park so that both SAFRA members and the public will benefit from such a development. A development committee

comprising NSmen of different professions has been formed to spearhead the project. When completed by year 2000, the fourth clubhouse will feature a spa, gymnasium, food and beverage outlets, swimming pools, light adventure and other popular facilities for members and their families. By siting the fourth clubhouse in the north of Singapore, SAFRA will be closer to the doorsteps of NSmen staying in that vicinity. This will help to fulfill SAFRA's plan to have a more even spread of clubhouses across our island to serve NSmen more conveniently.

Besides, the hardware of clubhouse and facilities, SAFRA can improve on the software aspects of membership servicing. Service quality is the cornerstone of customer satisfaction. Within the context of its charter and resources, SAFRA should aim to raise its quality of service to increase customer satisfaction. As an organisation for NSmen, SAFRA should continue to project itself as a professionally managed and prominent organisation. SAFRA should draw more talent from the NSman pool to manage its clubhouses and programmes thereby injecting higher professionalism and stronger identity among the NSman population. In this way, SAFRA will continue to enjoy broad-based and mass support and enhance the meaning and value of SAFRA membership.

On this note, I would like to thank all members, volunteers, corporate supporters and staff for helping to make SAFRA's first 25 years a success. I am confident that with their continued support and participation, the next 25 years will be even more eventful and rewarding for SAFRA. Finally, my congratulations to all award recipients, this evening, on their achievements.

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