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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY ASSOC PROF HO PENG KEE
MINISTER OF STATE (LAW AND HOME AFFAIRS) AT THE
23rd BASIC OFFICERS' COURSE COMMISSIONING PARADE
ON 16 FEB, 6.00 PM AT SCDF CIVIL DEFENCE ACADEMY**

Commissioner James Tan
Senior Officers, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Calling to Save Lives and Property

Today is a special day for every one of you on parade. You, as commissioned officers, have responded to a noble calling, to save lives and protect property.

2. Through nine months of intensive training, you have been trained to assume positions of responsibility. From now on, you will face fluid situations

where you have to make life and death decisions – no longer pre-determined scenarios or paper exercises. But the real thing. As SCDF senior officers, Singaporeans expect nothing but the best from you.

3. At incident sites, you will have to make quick, professional assessments and decide on the right course of action. During these incidents, you may have to deal with members of the public. They may be casualties, relatives or passers-by. You will have to empathise with them and reassure them that they, or their loved ones, are in safe hands.

4. In your fire stations, you will live and work with your crew. It is a challenging role, where you have to be counsellor, mentor and friend. Every facet of your training will be tested to the fullest. You will have to perform multiple tasks simultaneously, ranging from incident mitigation to public management to ensuring the safety of your crew.

5. This is the kind of decisiveness and leadership that you have been trained for. I am confident that all of you will rise to the occasion when circumstances require you to do so.

Implement, Improvise, Innovate

6. You have learnt many skills and mastered many technological systems during your course. Your seniors would have shared their experiences with you. Let me round up the course with three words of advice: implement, improvise and innovate. In implementing, you may have to improvise; if improvising is not good enough, you will have to innovate.

7. These three words require you to practise many different skills. Foremost is the art of critical thinking. “Is this the best way to achieve my objective?” is a question that ought to follow you throughout your career. You should regularly review about the way we work. When you have a better solution, it will require perseverance on your part to convince your team that it furthers the SCDF Vision and Mission and to see the changes through to the very end.

8. This is true whether you are posted to a line or staff position. Only then,

will the organisation continue to progress. For example, a few years ago, our Emergency Ambulance Fleet was fully manned by nurses seconded from hospitals. However, to further improve our service to the public and overcome the shortage of nursing staff, we introduced paramedics who are trained to be specialists in pre-hospital care.

9. I remember when I witnessed the first group of women officers graduate and take charge of a rota at the Fire Stations. If we had stuck to the preconceived notion that delivering emergency services in Singapore is a man's domain, this would never have happened. I have also witnessed a lady senior officer who graduated as the best trainee from her batch of officer cadets. All these women senior officers have since proven themselves in the field, winning the respect of fellow senior officers and fire fighters.

The SCDF Officer Today – High-Tech and Skilled

10. The onus is now on you to display all the qualities you have learnt and bring them to bear to your job. With your training, I am confident that you will overcome all obstacles in the years ahead. With your training in advanced technology, you are no longer the fire-fighters of old, but highly skilled officers capable of handling a variety of civil defence operations including Hazmat incidents.

11. I congratulate you on your graduation today. The challenges will be tough, but the rewards will be satisfying. I am sure you will do Singapore and the SCDF proud.

12. To the families and friends who are here today, we thank you for your support. Your unwavering support will help the officers face the challenges on the ground.

13. Once again, I congratulate all newly commissioned officers on parade today. I am sure you will all have rewarding careers in the Home Team. Thank you.

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