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Welcome Address by Mr Matthias Yao Chih, Minister of State for Defence, at the 1999 Employers' Visit to 432 SAR ICT

01 Feb 1999

Good afternoon

Ladies and Gentlemen

First a warm welcome to all of you to this Employers' Visit to the SAF. All your presence here today bears testimony to the strong support and commitment given by employers to the SAF and to the defence of our Nation.

This annual visit to the SAF is part of MINDEF's continuous effort to help employers better understand National Service policies. It is organised to allow you to see at first hand the training that your employees, as Operationally Ready National Servicemen, undergo when they attend in-camp trainings. We hope that such visits will help reinforce the important role that you as employers play in motivating your employees in their NS duties.

This afternoon, you will see a live firing exercise conducted by NSmen from 432 Singapore Armour Regiment (SAR). They will show you our Army's capabilities and their operational proficiency in handling SAF's equipment. Overall, we hope to give you a better insight into the SAF's highly professional operations and high-tech operations.

We have lined up an interesting programme for you today. Yet, I am sure many of you will remain somewhat preoccupied with the current economic crisis that is affecting the whole region, and how it will impact your business. Indeed, it will be difficult and uncertain times for Singapore as 1999 unfolds.

Despite the difficulties and uncertainties ahead, it is important that we do not lose sight of the fundamentals which have been the key to Singapore's success. These fundamentals are peace and stability. We need a strong SAF backed by an equally effective Total Defence capability to provide the foundations for continued peace and stability. This will give investors confidence to keep their money and business in Singapore, which in turn will help Singapore tide over this difficult period.

But building a strong SAF is a long-term process which requires prudent and steady investment over many years. We must continue to take our defence seriously. We must show that we are prepared to invest heavily in it both in good times and in bad times.

Over the years, the SAF has kept pace with our nation's economic progress by constantly enhancing its capability and readiness. We have today a strong and effective SAF.

Crucial in making the SAF what it is today has been the selfless contributions and sacrifices of NSmen over the last 32 years. NSmen now make up over 80% of the SAF strength and they are our frontline soldiers, operationally ready to fight shoulder to shoulder with their active counterparts. Clearly, all this is possible largely because of the firm support and encouragement of employers.

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We are fortunate that employers support and understand the importance of National Service even during this period of tough economic times. MINDEF is very appreciative of these efforts. We will continue to explore ways to minimise the disruption and inconveniences caused to NSmen and employers.

In closing, I would like to say a big "thank you" to all employers in Singapore – all of you here today – for your contributions, support and commitment to the SAF and the defence of our Nation.

Thank you and have a pleasant afternoon.

News Release:

- Employers Witness Live-Firing Exercise by NSmen (Document No: MINDEF_19990201001.pdf)

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