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Speech by Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Defence and National Development Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman at the Committee of Supply Debate 2013

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Training and Development

Progress of Learning and Training Initiatives Mr Deputy Chairman, Mr Ong Teng Koon and Dr Intan Mokhtar asked how we are improving our learning and training systems. Given the changing profiles of our NSFs, who are more accustomed to self-learning and team-based discussions, our systems must also keep pace to enable our soldiers to learn, train and develop professionally.

Over the years, the SAF has introduced modern instructional methods, simulation technologies and interactive applications that enhance our soldiers' training experience. SMS Chan spoke briefly about our investment in simulators and about the Multi-Mission Range Complex earlier. Other new training facilities to be launched this year include the Murai Urban Live-Firing Facility for coordinated live-firing training in urban settings; the Air Force's Tower and Radar simulators, which feature 360-degree projection systems; and the Navy's shore-based emulator facility that will enable realistic warfare training for multiple ships simultaneously.

LEARNet is another platform that has made learning more interactive and effective through portable devices. Since its pilot implementation in 2009, soldiers have been able to learn at their own pace, share feedback on training lessons, and apply their learning out in the field. A significant benefit of LEARNet is the classroom time saved. For example, it now takes approximately 4 to 5 hours less to learn how to operate a SAR 21 rifle, leaving more time for hands-on practice. With your permission, Mr Deputy Chairman, I would like to share a screenshot of a LEARNet module.

Meeting the Aspirations of Today's Servicemen

Mr Ong also asked how the SAF meets the aspirations of today's servicemen. Over the years, various steps have been taken to recognise our servicemen as strategic and active contributors to the SAF, including implementing enhanced career schemes - for Officers, Warrant Officers and Military Experts - that cater to different aspirations and organisational needs. We provide a competitive career proposition by offering meaningful employment to maximize the individual serviceman's potential, providing unique opportunities for our servicemen to serve in operational deployments, and developing our servicemen through continuing education and professional military training.

Total Defence and Commitment to Defence

Sir, complementing our efforts in Military Defence is our Total Defence framework.

Dr Intan asked about MINDEF's plans to ensure public understanding of the importance of Total Defence. We agree with Dr Intan that this is a very important aspect of Total Defence. That is why our Total Defence campaigns in recent years have sought to engage Singaporeans at a more emotional level and encourage ground-up initiatives. This year's campaign, for example, themed "Will You Stand With Me?", carried the message that when Singaporeans stand together and work as one, just as we did during the SARS outbreak a decade ago, we can overcome any challenge.

This message further came alive through the key component of this year's campaign, the Total Defence Challenge, in which 25 teams comprising SAF personnel, students, active agers and people with disabilities worked together to complete tasks embodying each pillar of Total Defence. Corporate donors also showed their support for the Challenge, matching in dollar value the points accumulated by the teams, and donated some \$224,000 to the Community Chest.

MINDEF also runs the N.E.mation!, a digital animation competition for youths, as part of our Total Defence engagement efforts. I am pleased that the number of story submissions has increased from around 800 in the past few years to a record 1122 entries this year. We also ran the first ciNE65 short film competition in 2011, and received an encouraging 72 entries. We have just launched the second run of ciNE65, and will continue to explore various platforms to allow different segments of society to share their take on what defending Singapore and the Singapore identity means to them.

Mr Deputy Chairman, Mr Alex Yam and Dr Intan asked how MINDEF ensures public commitment to defence and confidence in the SAF. MINDEF reaches out to grassroots

leaders, employers, trade union leaders and other stakeholders through regular dialogue sessions and visits to SAF units, and also through the Advisory Council for Community Relations in Defence, or ACCORD. In collaboration with MOE, MINDEF works with all 30 Post-Secondary Education Institutions under the SAF-School Partnership Programme to organise student engagement activities. To reach out to more Singaporeans, we also held the Army Open House for the first time in the city last year at the F1 Pit Building, which attracted a record turnout of 188,000 visitors.

Beyond these outreach efforts to bring the SAF closer to Singaporeans, our NS system, as a key institution of Singapore society, is the best opportunity to enhance Singaporeans' commitment to defence. NS is more than just the obligations of NSFs and NSmen - it should be the commitment of every family member and employer. Support from family members and employers is critical for our NSFs and NSmen to continue performing their defence roles.

Most of us will recognise Resorts World Sentosa, or RWS, as the company that operates Universal Studios Singapore. What you might not know is that RWS actually employs more than 2,500 NSmen amongst its staff, and has put into place a range of processes to support NS, such as revamping its HR system for supervisors to efficiently manage their employees' NS commitments and allowing the recently issued NS45 vouchers to be used at its attractions and shops. In recognition of its commendable support for NS, RWS was awarded the Meritorious Defence Partner Award in July 2012 at the Total Defence Symposium.

Some of you might have also watched 2LT Zacky go through Officer Cadet School, or OCS, in the cyberpioneerTV web-series Every Singaporean Son II. While 2LT Zacky had initially found the training at OCS to be physically and mentally challenging, the constant support and encouragement from his parents spurred him on and he eventually emerged as the third best graduate in his infantry cohort. Such examples underscore the invaluable role that employers and families play in supporting NS.

Mr Yam and Dr Intan also asked about MINDEF's online engagement efforts. We actively use social media to reach out to different segments of Singaporeans. There are currently nearly 400 video clips on life in the SAF on our cyberpioneer TV YouTube channel, which has received close to 11 million views and 20,000 subscribers. MINDEF's vibrant online presence is also reflected with more than 33,000 users "liking" the cyberpioneer Facebook page, where we post updates and photos of ceremonies, exercises and more. These efforts help to deepen public understanding of and support for NS and defence. Recognising the power of social media platforms, the Army also launched its Facebook page earlier this month. Our cyberpioneer and Army Facebook pages are useful platforms for our servicemen to celebrate their shared stories of service, rites of passage,

camaraderie and sacrifice. This ground-up sharing of common experiences can help to enhance our servicemen's cohesion and engage them more deeply. MINDEF manages the associated risks of social media participation by educating our servicemen to use social media responsibly, and reminding them that their exchanges, even on non-official platforms, should not compromise safety and security.

Mr Deputy Chairman, it is also encouraging to see Singaporeans driving initiatives which help to strengthen commitment to defence. Some of you may have watched Jack Neo's films *Ah Boys to Men* and *Ah Boys to Men 2*. The films struck a chord in many Singaporeans with their candid portrayal of Army life, becoming the highest-grossing Singapore films of all time. This sentiment was vividly captured by Ms Heng Shu Qing, who wrote after watching the first instalment that "*Ah Boys to Men* tells a story that will touch the heart of every Singaporean. It is not merely just a laugh but to remind us that our independence did not come by so easily. So love our land and never take it for granted." We look forward to more such initiatives, which bring richness to our NS story and underscore the public's support for NS.

With your permission, Mr Deputy Chairman, I have asked the clerk to place on the MPs' seats additional materials that show how MINDEF has been engaging the public on defence issues. One of the materials is a DVD on the top 10 N.E.mation! 7 clips. Let me conclude by showing you this year's winning clip, produced by four young students from Ahmad Ibrahim Secondary School last year, when they were in Secondary 2. On screen is a picture of the team at the award ceremony last month. You can see their happy faces; all the young people. And you will see the clip later on. It warms the heart to know that young Singaporeans understand the challenges we face. Mr Deputy Chairman, may I have your permission to screen the video? Please enjoy.

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