



SPEECH

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Speech by Senior Minister of State for Defence Mr Ong Ye Kung at Launch of National Paramedic Training and Education Roadmap

16 Oct 2015

Chief of Defence Force MG Perry Lim,

Chief of Medical Corps COL (Dr) Tang Kong Choong,

Commissioner SCDF Eric Yap,

President of UniSIM Prof Cheong,

Principal of NYP Jeanne Liew,



Our friends from JIBC, Dr Tarko - thank you very much for your guidance and help all these years,

Our new graduands of the diploma and their families, congratulations,

Not to forget our pioneers of the Paramedic Corps - thank you very much for your

service all these years,

Ladies and gentlemen, friends, a very good afternoon.

I am very happy to be here in this two-in-one programme - both graduation as well as the launch of this paramedic training roadmap. First, let me talk a little bit about paramedics. They are allied health professionals, first responders to the sick and injured in the actual operating field. It is a critical component of emergency care. Your work happens before the hospitals. I just learnt from Dr Tarko that in Canada, you are also deployed in the emergency rooms in the hospitals. You are at the frontline when the injury happens. And you operate in very difficult environments, usually in an emergency and what you do makes the difference between life and death.

So while preparing for this speech, I asked the SAF for an example of a paramedic who did really well, and one example came immediately to mind. I was told earlier this year, on 2 Jan 2015, a dog handler from Tengah Air Base had a sudden cardiac arrest and he was brought to the medical centre. The medical team comprised five people - one doctor and four medics. More importantly, there was a senior medic - ME3 Chua Choon Lin - who helped to coordinate the resuscitation effort. And he is a paramedic. In the day-to-day running of all our training facilities and our camps, paramedics watch the situation to ensure that training is conducted in as safe an environment as possible. And it is also because of the work they do in training our medics - all our frontline operations, medical centres, outfield battle casualty stations - are all in a high level of readiness. And that is all possible because of your work.

Looking back, young people today grow up in an era of impatience. Everything we do, we multitask. We grew up with handphones - we will be checking our emails, listening to music, reading the news all at the same time. When we are in the MRT, we take the train but we are also making phone calls. And we grow up basically wanting to make the best use of our time and are often multitasking. And so, day-to-day habits have become like that. When we enter National Service (NS) or as Regulars, we too want to make the best use of our time, multitask if possible.

Hence, there is a big push now within the SAF to allow the skills that you learn while you are serving to be certifiable so that it is useful to you throughout your lives. This also enhances the value of NS. So for paramedics this is now possible by enhancing existing courses, by introducing new courses and creating a vocational pathway that goes all the way now to a degree qualification.

And now the SAF is aiming to put all Regulars who have attained EMS to the next level of upgrading, which is a new diploma programme introduced by Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) called Diploma in Paramedicine. The diploma programme comes in two versions which are very good, 300 hours and 900 hours, the difference being the prior training experience. So just to add, NYP will also accept the Higher Nitec in Paramedic and Emergency Care into its course. So you need not always be from the SAF and SCDF. This is an effort by the

SAF and SCDF to upgrade the qualifications of all its Paramedic Corps. What is better now is that with the NYP diploma, the learner can now enroll into the degree programme at SIM University (UniSIM), with a Minor in Paramedicine and Emergency Response. The SAF will also be extending the Military Expert study award to paramedics. When you are performing well in the service, you have the potential, you get the study award to do the UniSIM degree programme. So there is an entire pathway now for you charted out.

Now, charting out a pathway is not something very new. But what is very special about this pathway I think are three things, and we should remember them because these are the secret ingredients to success. First is that you must have employers, in this case the SAF and SCDF, who are prepared and committed to upgrade the standard of professionalism of this vocation, in this case, paramedicine. Second, there must be mutual recognition, because you just look at the players in this pathway - the SAF, SCDF, NYP, UniSIM - different institutions but they have come to the conclusion that they respect each other's work, they mutually recognise each other's training and the qualifications at the end of those training. And so there is interoperability now between the institutions as well as the SAF and SCDF. Which is why we are able to move from the EMT to EMS to the NYP diploma to the UniSIM degree. And the third secret ingredient is an open enrolment policy.

Throughout the entire pathway, NYP did not impose a GPA requirement. UniSIM did not impose a GPA

requirement. If you impose a GPA requirement, what it means is that your academic results long ago are going to determine your future. But here it has been done away with, because it is a vocation. So long as you are in a vocation, you can do the job, you are performing well, the path is open for you to seize, just as Mr Lee Kuan Yew said in the opening video. It is that rainbow you can chase. The rainbow is not shut off because you had a poor GPA when you were 12 years old or 18 years old or some other age. And so these are important ingredients that we must ensure whenever we set up a path here. Finally I want to say many thank-yous. Thank you to the co-chairmen from the SAF and SCDF for making this possible and for taking leadership in this. Thank you to the ITE School of Applied and Health Science. Thank you to the NYP School of Health Sciences. Thank you to the UniSIM School of Science and Technology, and to the Justice Institute of British Columbia (JIBC). Thank you to the Ministry of Health's unit for pre-hospital emergency care, the Ministry of Education's higher education division, and the Workforce Development Agency's healthcare, social and business service division. And this is all possible because there are people who are passionate about saving lives at the frontline and this pathway I hope will help you fulfil your passion. And this is part of the SkillsFuture movement. Best wishes to everybody, and thank you very much.

News Release:

- SAF and SCDF Launch National Paramedic Training and Education Roadmap (MINDEF_20151016001_1.pdf)

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