



# SPEECH

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## **Speech by Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health Communications and Informations and Ministry of Health, at the 44/2020 Specialist Cadet Graduation Parade**

20 Aug 2020

Graduands of the 44/2020 Specialist Cadet Course,

Parents and loved ones of our Graduands,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

A very good evening to all of you.

### **Introduction**

I would like to first extend my heartiest congratulations to all the graduands on your successful completion of the Specialist Cadet Course. Today, you will don your Chevrons in the presence of your loved ones, and become Specialists of the Singapore Armed Forces. You now bear the responsibility of leading your men and women to defend Singapore. I am confident that you will carry out your duties with the same strength and determination that you have displayed over the past 22 weeks.

### **Current Context**

You started your Specialist Cadet training over five months ago, at a highly unusual time. Singapore had started seeing our first cases of local community transmission of COVID-19. In April, we implemented the circuit breaker measures and today, you are graduating in unprecedented times. We have been progressively lifting the circuit breaker measures starting in June, but Singapore - and the world - continue to battle COVID-19. Economies have been placed under extreme strain, and healthcare systems are being severely stretched. Global supply chains have been disrupted as nations attempt to secure essential

supplies to safeguard their way of life. US-China tensions have come to the fore, even as other security challenges - disputes in the South China Sea, terrorism, and cyber-threats - persist.

Amidst this uncertainty and complexity, we celebrated our 55<sup>th</sup> year as an independent nation a few weeks ago. National Day celebrations this year were different. We did away with the large-scale centralised National Day Parade, and the parade segments were moved to housing estates across Singapore, so that Singaporeans could join in the festivities wherever they were. Despite the different format, our National Day celebrations stayed true to its purpose - to rally the nation, to celebrate our shared spirit of resilience and determination to overcome regardless of the odds.

### **Giving Strength to Singapore**

Throughout the pandemic, the SAF has played its part to give strength to Singapore. Right from the start, the SAF deployed servicemen and women to assist other agencies in contact tracing, distributing masks, and later on, with the dormitories and medical services. Despite these heavy commitments, and despite the pandemic, the SAF did not compromise on your primary task of defending Singapore. Units continued to perform critical operations, in island defence, the protection of key installations, maritime security, air defence, and counter-terrorism. Essential In-Camp Training for NS units, as well as our cadet schools - including your training here - continued. All with precautionary measures in place to ensure that our servicemen and women are kept safe, so that they in turn can continue to keep us and Singapore safe.

The fight against COVID-19 is far from over. The impact that the pandemic has wrought on our geopolitical and security environment will be long-lasting. In the face of this new context, together with an expanding range of security challenges, the SAF must continue to be strong and adaptable, to defend our sovereignty and security. Over the last few months, the SAF has been resuming other training in a phased and safe manner, including overseas where conditions allow. I have every confidence that the SAF will be vigilant and ready against all manner of threats, even as it continues to be a part of our nation's fight against the pandemic.

### **Leaders of the SAF**

Today's graduation marks the beginning of your journey as Leaders of the SAF, leading the men and women under your charge towards mission success. Train them well, unlock their potential, and keep them safe. Beyond that, lead your people well. They will look to you as role models, and moral figures. Lead your people by example, and stay true to your values as you walk this journey with them. We trust that you will build strong and cohesive units, capable of defending Singapore and our way of life.

## **Closing**

Graduands, today is a day of celebration of the perseverance and hard work that each of you have put in for the past 22 weeks. It is also a day of gratitude, to thank those who have nurtured and supported you, and cheered for your achievements. To the families and loved ones of our graduands, thank you for your support and commitment to the defence of Singapore. To our graduands, congratulations again on the completion of your training and joining the Specialist Corps. I trust that you will do your utmost to discharge your duties and to take care of the soldiers entrusted to you. I wish you the very best in your leadership journey ahead.

**With Pride We Lead!** Thank you.

## **News Release:**

- 1,189 Graduate as SAF Specialists (Document No: MINDEF\_20200820001)

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