

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

MC. MAR. 31/66 (DEFENCE)

SPEECH BY THE MINISTER OF STATE (DEFENCE), MR. WEE TOON BOON, AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF SPECIAL TRAINING COURSE FOR GROUP AND TEAM LEADERS OF THE VIGILANTE CORPS AT THE POLICE TRAINING SCHOOL ON 14.3.66.

When the venom of confrontation was at its height in 1964, we were part of Malaysia; bomb explosions and other activities of sabotage and infiltration were the order of the day. We in Singapore set the lead by organising the Vigilante Corps all over Singapore to patrol vulnerable areas, to protect life and property and to keep the destructive elements at bay. Our Vigilante Corps was a success and as time went on there was a discernible decrease in the number of incidents. August 9th, 1965 saw the enforced separation of Singapore from Malaysia and Singapore's emergence as an independent and sovereign nation but nevertheless, our Vigilante Corps remained to become a permanent feature in the life of our nation.

The Vigilante Corps is an organisation of people themselves to actively participate in close collaboration with the regular Police to maintain peace and order. Their role is vital because we cannot expect the Police to be at all places all the time as they are burdened with other multifarious duties. The Vigilante Corps, as an organisation of the people must, therefore, in their own interest and that of the nation take over in a limited form some of the functions of the Police and by so doing, they will not only assist the Police but also assist themselves and the nation. We believe in law and order and peace, but law and order and peace are factors in social life that cannot be left to free play. Indeed, the fundamental need for law and order and peace is an organised force to maintain it, and such a force is all the more effective if the people themselves organise voluntarily with assistance from the regular Police.

In independent Singapore the responsibilities of the people are naturally greater, and it is therefore desirable that the Vigilante Corps is re-organised to be a more effective instrument for maintaining law and order. For this purpose, it is worthwhile that some form of training to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Vigilante Corps should be pursued. The development of a sense of discipline through training will lead to greater consciousness of responsibilities and a sense of duty and dedication to the nation.

You, leaders of the Vigilante Corps, who are here today for training, are the vanguard of a well-organised, efficient and effective Vigilante Corps that is being built up. As Leaders you will be responsible for using the training that you have received wisely and rationally, for leading your men effectively and building them up into a useful instrument for maintaining law and order.

MARCH 14, 1966.

Time 11.30 a.m. 1730 hours