

MC: JUN/26/68(CULE)

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS STATEMENT

(EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY ON SAT.22/6/68 AT 8.00 PM)

SPEECH BY PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER FOR CULTURE, MICHE SHAARI B. TADIN, AT THE 29TH ANNIVERSARY OF YEW GHEE SIA ASSOCIATION, PING ANN ROAD, ON SATURDAY, 22ND JUNE, AT 8.00 P.M.

I am pleased to be able to attend this function to celebrate the 29th anniversary of the Yew Ghee Sia Association. There is no better way to mark the occasion than the presentation of a cheque to the National Defence Fund.

Your Chairman, Mr. Ang Teok Hui, has acquainted me with some aspects of the history of your association during the last 29 years. I was pleasantly surprised to learn of the value of self-reliance which the association was inculcating amongst members long before the advent of political independence. This tradition of self-help will stand the people in good stead. It must continue, and what is more gratifying, your association is characterised by the ability to looking beyond kampong level. This contribution to the National Defence is adequate proof.

The National Defence Fund has now become a symbol of our determination to be a nation that will not wilt before bigger nations, one that will stand up to fight for what it stands for. If this is a forecast of the support we can get, then the National Defence Fund Campaign which is shortly to be launched for Kampong Chai Chee Constituency is likely to make strong headway. As a start 5 members of our Main Citizens Consultative Committee have already contributed a sum of \$1,700/-.

National Defence is every loyal citizen's business, and no matter whether he is a National Serviceman or not, it is his duty to give his support in every possible way.

For nearly 149 years, our country had been defended by the British and in the tranquility of Big Power protection, we had been unmolested in our commercial and other development. One of the things independent countries have to shoulder is defence - which is costly.

I am not going to burden you with the defence expenditure of other countries except to quote Israel and Japan, which are both prosperous countries and which spend about 30% and 40% of their Budgets respectively on defence. By comparison, our defence expenditure at the moment is a mere 18% of our Budget. But in the next two or three years we may have to cut down expenditure of other ministries in order to give priority to defence. This is necessary in view of our defence build up.

This goes to prove that defence is no luxury. It is a "must" and is a precondition for economic prosperity. Our region has often been described as a turbulent one. At the moment, it is true that we see no signs of big-scale eruptions around us. We want this state of affairs to continue. The relative tranquility prevailing today is due in large measure to the 'antibiotics' injected by the rational national leaders of neighbouring countries. Unfortunately there is no guarantee that things will remain this way.

As long as this region is one of potential if not actual conflict, until the region is effectively neutralised, our National Defence is a matter of life-and-death. So when the time comes for the Defence Fund to be launched in this area, I have no doubt of your overwhelming support.

May I end my speech by saying how glad I am to be with you all today on the occasion of the 29th Anniversary celebrations of the Yew Chee Sia Association.

21ST JUNE, 1968.

TIME ISSUED: 1145 HOURS.