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SPEECH BY MR. WEE TOON BOON MINISTER OF STATE (DEFENCE) AT THE
PASSING OUT CEREMONY OF THE FIRST ENGINEERS AND DEMOLITION
COMMANDERS COURSE AT BLAKANG MATI ON FRIDAY 23RD AUGUST, 1968

In the short space of three years since we became an independent and sovereign nation, we have built up our Armed Forces with commendable speed without sacrificing quality. Though our Armed Forces cannot be very large in numbers as compared with bigger countries, we are, however, not banking on just numerical strength but on the quality and calibre of our citizens who comprise the defence arm of the Republic. The 1st Engineers and Demolition Commanders course organised by the Singapore Armed Forces takes us another step forward in the building of a compact and self-contained force. The training that members of our Armed Forces receive is second to none in the world. They build up in our people not only the skills that a soldier must possess but also qualities of character, courage and conviction that together shape the true soldier and citizen of our country.

As officers and senior NCOs who provide the leadership to the rank and file your responsibilities are heavy. As leaders of men you should be able to infuse and instil into your men a high sense of discipline and character, loyalty and devotion to the cause of the nation and courage in the field of battle. The most enduring quality of an individual or a people is his or their character. It is unlike fame, popularity or riches which dim and disappear in history's cauldron; the true character of the people which is symbolised by courage, conviction, loyalty and devotion will be enshrined in the portals of history, as posterity's indelible judgement.

The course in Engineering and Demolition which you have undergone and completed will now enable you to discharge your duties and responsibilities to the Singapore Armed Forces and the nation proficiently. Your greatest responsibility would however be as instructors to our national servicemen because on you will devolve the responsibility of shaping them not only into efficient and disciplined military men but also as responsible citizens who, with the training that they have received and the skills that they have developed, will be able to contribute effectively in the task of building a strong and virile nation. The impact that national service will have on our youths will be tremendous for equipped with skills and discipline, they will play a most important role in reshaping and revitalising our society; they will constitute the breed of new citizens who will constitute the new Singapore that is fast taking shape before us.

I congratulate all those who have successfully completed this first course and I have no doubt that they will discharge their duties responsibly and that their performance will more than exceed our expectations.