

TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY TO THE
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, INCHE SHA'ARI TADIN, AT A SENDING
OFF CEREMONY OF SECOND BATCH OF NATIONAL SERVICEMEN
FOR KAMPONG CHAI CHEE CONSTITUENCY, AT KAKI BUKIT
COMMUNITY CENTRE, ON THURSDAY, JANUARY 2, AT 9 A.M.

It is a pleasure to be present at this ceremony to bid farewell to the second batch of national servicemen to be called up from this constituency. Probably amongst you are school-leavers, clerks, teachers, graduates, undergraduates and so forth representing a cross-section of our society.

You know that in some countries students get themselves involved in politics by holding street demonstrations and in their acts of emotionalism often bring violence and distraction to public property and in some instances, loss of innocent lives. We cannot afford to allow such acts of rowdism in Singapore. We believe that our students are "sensible" enough to realise that such behaviour will benefit neither them nor the country.

We want to make Singapore a leading nation in this part of the world. We may not have the natural resources like our neighbouring countries, but what we can offer is the human expertise which we have in abundance. Our greatest assets are, of course, our youth. Unless we harness these resources in youth and exploit their abilities for the country's needs we will not be able to overcome the tasks ahead. The training that you will receive during the course of your national service will not be confined only to the art of military warfare but more important it will inject into you the spirit of nation-building and civic and community consciousness, so that you will be able to pass over the experience and training to those who are less fortunate than you are.

If only the youth of Singapore could set a good example to the younger generation, especially how best they should utilise their spare time, energy and potentialities then our hope of building a model society is within our reach in the next generation.

You know, instead of clamouring for exemption, the students here could well have written memoranda on how best they could fit into national service. After all, they are supposed to play leading roles in nation-building, and be able to provide some of the future leadership in Singapore. They are supposed to set an example to others not so fortunate in receiving higher education.

Even at this present rate of building up our defence, by 1979 we will be in a position to mobilise immediately 45,000 well-trained soldiers, that2/-

soldiers, that is, some eight years after the last phase of the British withdrawal. After 1979, an adequate strength of our 45,000 well-trained soldiers will be self-perpetuating, that is, those off the reserve list will be automatically replaced, so that the number of 45,000 will be constant. As an open society, when we say our defence strength is so much and so much, it has to be so. There can be no bluff about it. These figures can be checked by others. And there is no question of a fictitious defence building-up. It has to be real, effective and concrete.

By 1979, we will have 45,000 well-trained men ready to be called up during any national emergency, supported by adequate skills and equipment. Only when this stage of build-up is attained can Singapore as a self-supporting and independent state enjoy security. We are a small state. But small as we are, we are not exactly unwanted. In fact, we are considered a very valuable prize. In order to adequately safeguard ourselves, we must have an adequate level of deterrence that only a 45,000 reserve army can provide.

This only underlines the importance of national service. No matter what race, language or religion you profess, no matter what your occupations are, you all have been selected for a man-sized job, that is national service. This means that you have something to contribute, and it is the duty of national service to help develop your talents and abilities to the maximum during the next two years of your training period. This will stand you in good stead when you return to civilian life. There is no question of being out of practice since you will be required to undergo ten years as reservists during which period your knowledge will be kept alive and useful. By the same reasoning, there is no question of seeking exemption from national service by any group of individuals.

May I now congratulate you all on your being selected for the honour of serving the country through national service, and may I wish you all the best of luck and success.

JANUARY 2, 1969.

(Time issued: 0900 hours)
