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SPEECH BY PRIME MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG AT THE OPENING
CEREMONY OF SAFTI MILITARY INSTITUTE ON FRIDAY, 25 AUGUST
1995 AT 7.00 PM

The opening of the SAFTI Military Institute is an event all Singaporeans can be proud of. This Institute is not just a collection of buildings for the training of military officers. It is a national institution, embodying our will to defend our nation, our determination to fight to preserve our freedom and way of life, if the need ever arises. It is a symbol of how far we have come as an armed force and as a nation. The SAFTI Military Institute encapsulates our pride and patriotism as Singaporeans.

The history of the SAFTI Military Institute began in June 1966 with the first batch of officer cadets who entered SAFTI at Pasir Laba Camp. The instructors and officer cadets had to make-do with makeshift wooden buildings. The living conditions were spartan and training facilities primitive. But the

morale and the enthusiasm of the pioneers were high. There was a strong sense of mission. For every officer cadet understood the urgent need to build up the SAF to face the perils of the time.

The idea for this new training complex was born in the 1980s. The needs of the SAF had become increasingly complex and integrated. The SAFTI Military Institute has excellent training and support facilities. It also offers a revamped structure of officer courses. These courses not only meet operational requirements but, more importantly, develop leadership and character. Through centralised officer training and a emphasis on tri-Service integration, the SAFTI Military Institute will focus on building a cohesive and strong SAF. All core officer training schools, starting with Officer Cadet School, are now co-located here. Our young men in the Army, Navy and Air Force will receive their first lessons in leadership as officer cadets. During their foundation training they will develop deep bonds of comradeship. Later in their careers, whether as regulars or as National Service officers, they will return for advanced training. This provides another opportunity to renew and strengthen the bonds of friendship. They will return yet again for command and staff courses and senior commanders' courses.

It is through what they learn, the reinforcement of the values they acquired as cadets, and the abiding bonds they develop among themselves, that the SAF will develop greater strength build on trust, understanding and pride. The SAFTI Military Institute will not just be a place where one has trained. It will be the spiritual home for all SAF officers. This Military Institute will symbolise their individual and collective endeavour, and the achievements and traditions of the SAF. They will have a sense of identity, familiarity and affection when they return here - a sense of continuity with the past, a sense of their heritage, and a sense of their toughening years.

The indomitable spirit of the pioneer batch of SAFTI has endured in the SAF. It is the spirit to overcome great odds, to sacrifice, to shoulder a larger responsibility beyond self, to excel. It is important that we be reminded of these ideals, that we capture and preserve the spirit of the pioneers of SAFTI, because with peace and stability and growing prosperity, it is tempting to make soft choices.

The can-do SAFTI spirit must inhabit the SAFTI Military Institute. Without this spirit, these magnificent structures will be no more than an empty shell. They will have life but no vitality, soldiers but no dare. The SAFTI Military Institute must build on SAFTI's reputation for tough training and

military discipline, rigour and excellence, sacrifice and total dedication. It must inculcate spirit and ideals in our military officers. Those who pass through SAFTI Military Institute will forever bear the imprint of their experience here, an imprint which makes them stand out from others who have not passed through its portals.

The SAF is a citizens' armed forces. The officer corps of the SAF thus has a leadership role that extends beyond the SAF. Many of our National Servicemen will assume other non-military leadership positions in society. The values they have imbibed in SAFTI will then permeate our society. The SAFTI Military Institute thus plays a critical part in shaping and underpinning the values and attitudes of our society.

The effort and the resources we have put in to build the SAFTI Military Institute are immense. The returns may not be tangible and cannot be quantified. But they are decisive in determining whether or not Singapore continues to enjoy security, stability and prosperity.

The SAFTI Military Institute must kindle and nurture the spirit of endeavour, the drive for excellence, and the supreme effort which every SAF officer must make on behalf of his country. Every officer who marches on these

grounds must be ready to lead, to excel and to overcome. With the passage of time, these grounds will become hallowed by the spirit of Singapore's finest young men.

I now have the pleasure to declare the SAFTI Military Institute open.

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