

Speech by Dr Lee Chiaw Meng, Minister for Science and Technology at the Commissioning Ceremony of SAF Officers at the Istana on 6th November, 1975



On the occasion of the Commissioning Ceremony of SAF officers I would like to discuss the subject of Professionalism in the Army. Professionalism is a term much referred to in all military organisations, regimental and military history. Generals stress it as a pre-requisite of any respectable Army, Company Commanders demand it as an indication of their men's effort and quality and Regimental Sergeant Majors exhort newly inducted recruits to develop it as a way of life if they do not want to be square-bashed.

Professionalism is important in every human endeavour. It implies mastery of a job, pride in one's effort and quality of product. It is a trait important especially in the SAF because it is a relatively young organisation and high standards must now be set so that improvements can constantly be made in all fields of military activity subsequently. Professionalism in the SAF means that you give off your best in all your endeavours in military life, striving for nothing but the best and striving at all times to do all things well. It can be achieved by any officer and soldier of any rank, be he a regular or a national serviceman.

In peacetime, Professionalism is best achieved in training. The Company or Platoon Commander is professional when he attempts to train his company well and to get them to achieve high training standards. The soldier is professional when he is able to master basic military skills effectively and apply them well in real or simulated tactical situations. As national service officers, you will see that Professionalism is not the prerogative of regulars or of

experienced soldiers only. You can attain Professionalism in military life if you make an effort to achieve it.

Professionalism, as far as you are concerned can be achieved on your part if you are able as Platoon Commanders to train your men in the basics of soldiering - good physical training standards and good marksmanship. There is no point progressing in other areas when the basics have not been mastered. The Infantrymen and indeed every soldier's bread and butter, so to speak, lies in being able to shoot well and to move fast, if you are to preserve your own life and that of your colleagues in operations. Both are possible if you meticulously check your men during trainfire lessons and insist on completing the full stretch of 3 or 6 mile runs instead of doing a mile less because it is the easy way. It is, of course, much easier to turn a blind eye to poor training results because less effort is required. If you avoid this easy way out, you will have a platoon of men who can shoot well at the right targets and at the right time. In terms of physical standards, you will have the satisfaction of seeing that your platoon can outrun others and perform difficult tasks better than others. MINDEF has made it possible for incentives for excellence in marksmanship and physical training to be now available with the introduction of bounties for good performance in these fields. You only need to put in your effort as a Platoon Commander to get your men to achieve good results.

In peacetime, if you have a well trained platoon you will have the satisfaction of seeing your platoon win inter platoon and inter company physical and marksmanship competitions and Skill-At-Arms tests. You will find that at times when training is tough, your platoon will stand out well to fatigue and exhaustion, maintaining esprit and discipline.

All these are a direct effect on your own performance and self confidence. In real operations, good marksmanship and physical standards in units pay dividends. There is greater chance of success against human and natural enemies and less likelihood of your platoon sustaining casualties. This in turn boosts morale and preserves discipline even under adverse conditions.

If you strive to train a platoon of good shots and physically fit men, you would be able to be professional in your  $2\frac{1}{2}$  years of national service. In civilian time you would as a result of habit be professional in outlook towards whatever job or venture you undertake. To be professional in national service therefore pays dividends in later life.

I commend to you Professionalism as a desirable goal to attain during your period of service as officers.