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SPEECH BY MR. J.Y.M. PILLAY, PERMANENT SECRETARY,  
MINISTRY OF DEFENCE, AT THE PASSING-OUT-PARADE OF  
TECHNICAL TRAINees AT SELDEN WEST CAMP ON FRIDAY,  
9TH OCTOBER, 1970 AT 5.00 P.M.

It has been said that the Battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton. That dictum may very well have been true in the early years of the 19th Century. In the second half of the 20th Century, however, it is even truer to say that the battles of the future will very largely be determined - or, more appropriately in our context, aggression deterred - in the laboratories and workshops of a nation.

This situation arises because of the increasingly complex nature of weaponry used by conventional forces of modern nations. The outstanding characteristics of these weapons systems are, firstly, their costs and, secondly, the degree of skill required in their operation and maintenance. It is not a mere coincidence that generally the countries which can afford to procure with their own funds complex weapons systems also have the capacity to operate and maintain them effectively. In Singapore the financial resources are available to procure the most modern and advanced equipment required for our defence. I believe that we can also develop the capability to use these weapons effectively, to maintain them well and gradually to effect improvements on them.

The Ministry of Defence is now endeavouring to attract and retain some of the best young scientific and technological brains in the country. But we also need competent technicians and skilled workers. To meet our demand for skilled workers, training schools were established in our maintenance bases. About a year ago SAFTECH was formed to bring all these training

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schools under one establishment. SAFTECH's growth has been sustained, and enrolment has increased impressively. But it is not merely in numbers that the success of SAFTECH will be measured. More important are the knowledge and skills which trainees have acquired in SAFTECH and the work discipline which has been inculcated in them.

Those of you who are now passing out from SAFTECH will soon realise that your training in the school of life is only just starting. SAFTECH can only provide you with basic knowledge and know-how; your skills will have to be perfected through experience. In course of time some of you may come back to SAFTECH for higher courses. There is no reason why the more successful ones should not also proceed for higher education and training either here or overseas, as indeed some of your predecessors have done.

While the armed forces will be happy to retain you after your national service or voluntary service is over, you will find that should you leave us, the knowledge, experience and work discipline you have acquired in the SAF will be of great benefit to you and your future employers in civilian life. Needless to say, the longer you remain with us the greater will be your value outside!

I congratulate all of you on your turn-out this evening and wish you success in your endeavours. I hope you will not be found wanting in the bases and units to which you will be attached.