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SPEECH BY MR. PANG TEE FOW, PERMANENT SECRETARY  
TO THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE AT THE COMMISSIONING  
PARADE OF VOLUNTEER MEDICAL OFFICER CADETS AND  
PASSING OUT PARADE OF VOLUNTEER RECRUITS HELD ON  
SATURDAY, 7TH NOVEMBER, 1970 AT 5.00 P.M. AT  
BELCH ROAD CAMP

I am very pleased to be here this afternoon to review this Parade particularly when we are commissioning for the first time volunteers from the medical profession. Amongst those present here today are 14 doctors who have brought honour to their profession and to the Singapore Medical Association, the professional organisation to which they belong. These doctors will form the nucleus of the Volunteer Medical Corps within the People's Defence Force and by their example and precept, by their dedication and devotion, they take pride of place amongst all other professional bodies.

Today we are engrossed in the task of building up a defence force which is complete and self-sustaining with all the ancillary services that will make it second to none in the world. A medical unit is an essential component of any organised defence force. Indeed, the training that you have undergone has combined professional competence with other qualities which will enable you to become true and complete citizens of our country. Now that the medical profession has set the example, I am sure that other professional bodies would also want to play their part in providing our defence forces with the expertise and experience that they possess and the effectiveness of our defence system will be enhanced to the extent of their contributions.

Some may feel that age is a barrier to military training and discipline but the 14 doctors who have completed training and who are being commissioned today are between 35 and 40 years old - men who are not very young but whose dexterity, drive, energy and enterprise must surely make them the envy of many a spry teenager.

Their achievement is a manifestation of the determination of the people of Singapore, irrespective of their professional or civic status, to ensure that our defence capability is of the highest standard possible. This is all the more necessary if we are to keep pace with the march of events. If we slacken or if we are half-hearted, events will overtake us and the price of our folly will be the shame that we will bestow on future generations.

Plans are now being worked out between the representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the Singapore Medical Association to provide a scheme of medical attention for national servicemen. The early implementation of the scheme will further boost the efficacy of medical attention for our national service.

All those who have completed training today, whether you are medical men or not, must realise that you stand at the forefront of Singapore's defence organisation. A measure of the quality of a defence force is the morale amongst the officers and men, and one of the most important factors determining the level of morale is, I believe, the knowledge and faith that everything possible would be done to ensure that every man will receive in return for his services the care and attention that the full resources of the State will allow. This is the highest reward and honour that a people can bestow on their fellow-citizens who have sacrificed their time and, in some cases, more lucrative pursuits to volunteer for the defence of the nation. I am sure that each one of you here possesses the qualities of responsibility and endurance which will make you an exemplary citizen, that is one who is both a soldier and a civilian, in other words, an effective social digit which will strengthen the base upon which the pride and prosperity of the State rests.

May I wish all of you every success.