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SPEECH BY MR BERNARD CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE,
AT THE GRADUATION PARADE OF THE SIXTEENTH INTAKE OF FULL-
TIME POLICE NATIONAL SERVICEMEN AT THE POLICE ACADEMY
ON FRIDAY, 13 JULY 1979 AT 5.30 PM

This evening's passing out parade marks the graduation of 181 Special Constables trainees, 274 trainees of the Vigilante Corps and 15 trainees from the Auxiliary Police Force. They have completed a three-month basic course and will, after this parade, go on to on-the-job training for a further period of three months in the various police units, before being deployed to the Land Divisions to perform police duties. Since its beginning in July, 1975, the Police National Service (full-time) scheme has developed into a sizeable organisation with a force of almost 4,600 men, of which some 46 per cent are Special Constables and 54 per cent are Vigilantes. Another achievement of the Service was the development of its own officer corps. To date, there are 286 National Service officers assisting regular police officers to man the Service.

The channelling of some of our young men to the Police Force to perform their National Service has been made at the expense of lower intakes to the Singapore Armed Forces. At a time when we are beginning to feel the effect of declining birth-rates, this reduction has taken an added significance. We have elected to build up our Armed Forces through the National Service systems. After more than a decade, our people have come to accept National Service as a vital input to our survival as an independent and prosperous nation. We do, however, recognise that there are various forms of National Service, which, while complementary to one another in terms of fulfilling certain objectives, have the same common goal of ensuring that we have a credible defence capability to counter external threats as well as ensuring internal stability. It is within this framework that we initiated full-time National Service for the Police Force.

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To ensure that National Servicemen, whether they are in the SAF, Police, Vigilante Corps and other uniformed units, are properly trained and deployed to perform the roles assigned to them, the respective organisations must see to it that the use of the scarce human resources at their disposal must be optimised through appropriate training programmes and efficient allocation to specific areas of need. Further, such programmes and allocations must be properly co-ordinated and implemented to achieve the common objective of developing an overall defence force comprising all the necessary elements of the Armed Forces, Police and other auxiliary units. This calls for painstaking planning and constant monitoring of progress of training and deployment. Above all, there must be a greater sense of professionalism amongst those who are assigned the task of building up the respective services. Each responsible organisation should, therefore, consider its role as important as those of its partners in building up its own element of the overall defence force.

The National Servicemen on their part must take their job seriously, whether they are assigned to the SAF, the Police or the Vigilante Corps. Their efforts in their respective uniformed services will determine the level of capability which the entire defence force can attain. The more determined they are in making a good account of themselves, the more effective will be our defence organisation. On the other hand, if they fail to develop the skills and dedication required of them, our defence force will suffer a corresponding decline in quality. Ultimately, we will all be victims of this drop in standard as our own survival will be affected. In this respect, Police National Servicemen are, by the very nature of their duties, more exposed than other National Servicemen and therefore more frequently subjected to public scrutiny. Their close and constant contact with the public enables the public to have a good assessment of their capability. Similarly, their deficiencies would not escape notice. It is therefore important that they must set good examples themselves and go about doing their work seriously and efficiently. They must earn the respect of the public. Only in this way can they hope to achieve the level of competence and professionalism we have set for our defence.

My congratulations go to the graduating constables and vigilantes. I wish them success in having a rewarding career during the balance of the National Service days. #####