

Singapore Government

**PRESS RELEASE**

Information Division, Ministry of Culture, City Hall, Singapore 0617 • tel: 328191 ext. 352, 353, 354 / 362207 / 362271.

National Archives and

Records Centre, Singapore.

NOV 1979

NARC

Acc. No.

19	0050	3
----	------	---

MC/NOV/15/79 (Defence)

SPEECH BY MR BERNARD CHEN, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE  
AT THE COMMISSIONING CEREMONY AT THE ISTANA  
ON 6 NOVEMBER 1979 AT 1830 HOURS

Let me first of all congratulate all of you who are being commissioned this evening. Despite the presence of so many physically fit, newly commissioned officers, I would like to touch on the role the SAF has to play in the development of physical fitness among our regulars, full-time national servicemen and reservists.

This topic is an important one. The general tendency among our servicemen to achieve but not maintain physical fitness in the SAF is disturbing. Trainees for instance, tend to reach their peak in fitness only during their period of training, after which their level of fitness decline progressively until their run out date. For many, this decline is carried on to their reserve service, arrested only temporarily by the annual in-camp training. Even amongst those in active service, there is substantial difference in their level of physical fitness depending on the servicemen's vocation, for instance, a commando compared to that of a service personnel. Of course, we do not imply that all service personnel must achieve the same degree of physical fitness as the commandos but they must be no less motivated in striving to improve on their own physical training.

There is no short cut to keeping trim and fit. Physical exercise is essential. Fitness means a whole and healthy body with the capacity for sustained physical performance and the ability to recover from exhaustion as quickly as possible. Unfortunately, the spirit in sport or enthusiasm for games and exercises appears to be singularly weak. National Service officers in particular seem to regard physical training as a chore. The results of the officers' annual physical proficiency test bear testimony to this. Regular officers who are mostly older than the NS officers attained better results than their NS counterparts.

Obviously, physical fitness will have to become a regime of military life and not something to be left to the personal motivation of the individual concerned. MINDEF will therefore have to determine the method and form of physical exercises to be conducted by units to upgrade the physical fitness of the men. A project is currently underway to raise the overall standard of physical fitness in the SAF and to examine and recommend the types of physical training required for both the active and reserve units.

MINDEF is also looking into the possibility of identifying the weaker recruits from the stronger ones. Those recruits who are unable to meet the targeted requirements will be given special attention during basic training. For the recruits who are fit and able to perform the physical exercise at a higher standard, a shortening of their period of Basic Military Training by ~~2-3~~ days may be the incentive through which NS enlistees will come better prepared for military service. Those who are not sufficiently fit would have to undergo a longer period of training to bring them up to the required level of fitness.

The physical training syllabus in operational units have been reviewed and revamped to gear units to a higher level of physical fitness. New forms of physical training tests have been introduced to ensure that servicemen maintain a consistently high standard of fitness throughout their service with the SAF.

A programme will also be instituted in January 1980, to ensure that a reservist is fit for operational service at any time. This programme is aimed at building up the agility, endurance and stamina of the reservists. Reservists will be given the opportunity to train at their own time for the test. This programme is two pronged. Initially, during in-camp training when the reservist undergoes the upgrading of his physical fitness and later during the in between in-camp training period when he is called up to do a test to determine if he has maintained the level of required minimum fitness. Built into this system will be some disincentives. Failures would be recalled to execute a re-test once every two months. Those who failed on two successive re-tests will be required to undergo an extended full-time physical training programme in the SAF.

I need hardly stress the importance of maintaining a high level of physical fitness in the SAF. We must have servicemen who could both

soldier and fight. They cannot do this unless their level of physical fitness is at the peak at all times. As officers you must motivate the men to strive for excellence in physical fitness, not because MINDEF demands it but because it is to their advantage and that of the SAF. Above all, you must set yourselves a good example and establish a high standard of fitness which your men could emulate with pride. Your role as leaders in the SAF will be that much more meaningful and rewarding.

-----