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PRESS RELEASE

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SPEECH BY MR WAN HUSSIN ZOOHRI, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(HEALTH AND CULTURE), AT THE NATIONAL SERVICEMEN
SEND-OFF PARTY AT KAMPONG UBI COMMUNITY CENTRE
ON TUESDAY, 21 DECEMBER 1982 AT 9 AM

We are gathered here this morning to witness the sending-off ceremony for about 200 youths who will be enlisted for full-time National Service. Perhaps it is correct to assume that some of you including your parents and relatives have some anxiety over what you will go through during your period of National Service. This is quite natural as you will, of course, be experiencing new but interesting and challenging events and situations in your new environment.

In situation where one has to anticipate many unexpected eventualities it is important that one must be in a state of preparedness. Here, I am referring to a state of psychological and emotional preparedness. These are the preconditions which will help orientate your mental attitude and emotion to their proper bearing. Unless you are psychologically and emotionally prepared to the challenges ahead of you, you would, in the course of your initial training, take a longer time than the others in settling down to your new routine and procedures. May I also take this opportunity to remind parents and relatives who are present here today that just as much as we would like our youths to be psychologically and emotionally prepared it is equally important that the parents do the same. This mutual psycho-emotional support and encouragement between parents and their sons will strengthen the sense of commitment and confidence in the role and contributions of our youths towards the defence of our country.

Some Singaporeans have a myopic vision of what defence is all about. It is pertinent that we view the meaning and concept of defence in its broader perspective. The conventional thinking is to associate defence with just the military strategies and tactics of

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war. Granted that these are important in the face of enemy attacks. But defence has a deeper and a more profound meaning to it. It affects everyone's future. A physical deterrent is necessary to ensure that our homes, families, possessions and above all, our own way of life will be protected and preserved. It is only with a strong and efficient defence capability that our assets and heritage will be protected.

It is worth reminding ourselves that any shortcoming or failure in our defence system will render us vulnerable to our potential adversaries. In the final analysis if our Singapore Armed Forces fail all of us will suffer.

Our future depends on how we chart our own course. If we neglect our collective commitment and responsibility towards the defence of our country our own future will be a precarious one. It is, therefore, extremely important that the defence of the country must be seen as the collective will and responsibility of both the armed forces and the citizenry. Both have to forge a common destiny. Both must positively contribute to making our armed forces viable, efficient and effective. It is only with such a defence capability that we will be able to secure the future of our own choice and making.

There is, however, one other aspect of National Service which, invariably, escapes our attention. This is in the area of character building. You and your parents should consider your stay in the armed forces as a structured process of building and strengthening your character. Apart from the military training, there are equally rewarding qualities which you can learn. These include obedience, leadership, cooperation and teamwork, integrity, honesty, and steadfastness. These moral values are inherent in the overall curriculum and training of the armed forces. It must be said that a trained soldier or an officer in the armed forces must reflect and display the manifestation of a decent and highly self-disciplined citizen. If at the end of your enlistment period you are re-structured, remoulded and refined for the better it will certainly enhance your self-image. That will be a lasting asset for you and your family. The armed forces has, therefore, much more in store for you besides military training and discipline.

On that note I wish all of you a challenging and a rewarding National Service.
