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**SPEECH BY BG (NS) LEE HSIEN LOONG,  
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER,  
AT SAFTI MI TOPPING-OUT CEREMONY  
ON FRIDAY, 25 MARCH 1994 AT 5.00 PM**

It is an honour to officiate at the Topping-Out ceremony for the new SAFTI Military Institute, and the unveiling of the new SAFTI MI insignia. I am happy that construction of the Institute is on schedule, and that SAFTI MI will begin operations in a year's time. It will mark a new phase in the history of the SAF, and another milestone on the road of Singapore's nationhood.

All armed forces take the training of their officers extremely seriously. The capability, motivation and morale of their battalions and squadrons depend heavily on the quality of the officers. As a matter of necessity, armed forces therefore invest heavily in the institutions which train and groom the officer corps. West Point, Sandhurst and Duntroon are only the most well known examples.

In Singapore, we have the Singapore Armed Forces Training Institute, or SAFTI for short. SAFTI was founded in 1966 to train officers for the rapid build-up of the SAF. Since then, SAFTI has become a household word in Singapore. It has also established its reputation in the region. The word SAFTI conjures up images of tough training and strict discipline. The new SAFTI MI will inherit this reputation, but it must do more than preserve it. SAFTI MI will have to break new ground in training officers for the SAF for Year 2000 and beyond. It must develop in the officers leadership abilities which enable them to draw the best from their men,

who will be increasingly better educated, more questioning, and used to more creature comforts.

The grounds and buildings of SAFTI MI should convey this spirit of martial virtue and professional competence. Visitors entering the Institute should immediately feel its sense of mission and purpose, and realise its critical role in the nation's defence. The behaviour and bearing of the staff and students, and indeed the entire SAFTI environment, should reflect unmistakably the high standards of discipline and performance expected of cadets and trainees.

SAFTI MI must preserve the tough, rigorous training standards that have become the trademark of SAFTI. Yet it must also provide a broad-based education for our officer corps. We can achieve both. We must instil in our officers commitment, tenacity, and the determination to excel. At the same time, they should learn to analyse problems objectively, to plan ahead, to seek out knowledge and keep themselves up to date. Every SAFTI cadet and every visitor to SAFTI must go away utterly convinced that here ordinary urban youths enter, leave their boyhood behind, and emerge as dedicated, competent and tempered leaders of men.

The spirit of the old SAFTI must flourish in the new SAFTI. Those officers lucky enough to have been among the first batch of officer cadets know this spirit well. It was not the architecture - in 1966 SAFTI consisted of no more than a collection of wooden huts. It was the sense of being pioneers in a great adventure, being a vital part of the national defence, when the SAF was in its infancy and Singapore's survival hung in the balance. It was the determination to endure any training, however tough, and to overcome whatever lay in the way, no matter how hopeless the situation appeared.

It was only many years later that we expressed this

spirit in the words of the SAFTI motto, which are now in the SAFTI insignia: "To lead, to excel, and to overcome". This ideal should continue to guide and inspire each new generation of SAF officers.

In establishing SAFTI MI, we have brought together the core officer training institutions of the three Services into one Military Institute. Here we will train three Services to function as one SAF. The Institute will integrate the many subjects which a military officer must master, between the time he starts off as a young officer to when he is toughened commander. From tactical training to strategic awareness, from man management to combat leadership, an officer will receive at SAFTI at each point of his career the extent and depth of knowledge that he needs.

This Institute will give Army, Navy and Air Force officers not just pride in and knowledge of their own Services, but also an understanding of how his own Service contributes to the mission of the other two Services and of the SAF as a whole, and what the other Services do to help his Service succeed. As an officer grows in his career, each time he revisits SAFTI to attend a more senior training course, we will update and reinforce these lessons.

It is satisfying to see the SAFTI MI actually taking shape. May I congratulate all those who have helped us reach today's milestone in the development of the new SAFTI. The team of architects, engineers and other professionals on this project have worked closely with the military officers in the SAF to define the requirements, conceptualise the Master Plan and execute the works. They have explored many options, in both aesthetics and function, in "software" and "hardware", to find the best solution. The result shows that the effort has been worthwhile.

SAFTI's physical transformation from a collection of

wooden huts in 1966 into a modern military institute reflects the transformation of the SAF from its modest beginnings into a credible force today. In terms of professionalism, public standing, and demonstrated competence, the SAF has come a long way. SAF officers and cadets must make full use of these new facilities to prepare themselves for their weighty responsibility, to keep Singapore safe from danger and harm. Let SAFTI be a national symbol of steadfastness and commitment, duty and loyalty, tough-mindedness and fighting spirit, leadership and excellence.

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