PRIME MINISTER'S ADDRESS AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST SAF TRAINING AIDS COMPETITION AND EXHIBITION -- CONFERENCE HALL, SATURDAY, 19 JULY 1975

The SAF is constantly teaching recruits. With five intakes of National Servicemen a year, from different language streams, communication is critical. With time, education in primary and secondary schools should lessen the problems.

But many from dialect-speaking homes, in English language schools, have not been able to learn English in the days before bilingualism. Let us hope, with bilingualism, if they do not master English, they will have learnt enough Mandarin. Otherwise the SAF will have to continue its special Hokkien-speaking platoons. Fortunately, the problem is not as acute with Malay-speaking or Tamil-speaking homes.

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But no amount of words can describe a scene better than the picture. And no amount of still pictures or diagrams can be better than a scale model. And no model is as good as one which has moving parts to show how it works.

The American-Soviet space link-up, pictured with English words on one side and the Russian Cyrillic script on the other, dramatically illustrates this problem of communications. Millions of words have been used to describe it. However, diagrams and sketches of the spacecraft, depicting orbital paths, the final rendezvous, and the docking mechanisms, they give a more vivid idea of what took place than all the millions of words.

The more training aids, and the better they are, the easier it is to get national service recruits to understand what we want them to learn to do. Training aids are more important to the SAF than other armed forces, because we have to teach those who did not make the primary school leaving certificate and those who are going to universities. They all have to be taught, albeit at different speeds, and in different groups.

I congratulate those who have contributed to this exhibition and to the units that have won prizes for their ingenuity.

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