

# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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**SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE  
AT THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE "SAF STORY" EXHIBITION  
AT NATIONAL MUSEUM ON 28TH JUNE 1983 AT 1600 HOURS**

The history of Singapore as an independent nation is a short one. Our parents and grandparents came as migrants, hoping to make enough money to return home to their motherlands to retire in comfort. World War II came. Many fought the Japanese. Many died. The consequent political developments in Malaya, India and China played havoc with the simple plans of those who survived the War. The determination not to have to suffer in another war changed their outlook. So they stayed on in the British Colony of Singapore to make the best of an unexpected situation.

They worked hard under difficult conditions, without the air-conditioners that we now take for granted, without machines that lighten the load, and reduce the monotony. They laboured and they sweated and built the Singapore today. They fought for an independent Singapore. Despite very heavy odds, they built a developed and progressive nation. We are the sons and daughters of those hardy people.

The "SAF Story" is a record of the efforts made to protect and preserve what they have built and achieved as an independent nation. Through National Service and annual in-camp training, every generation of sons adds on to that story, contributing to the defence capability and preparedness that has given us peace and security, economic and social development. In the process of training our

people to be defenders of our Singapore we have also instilled a sense of national consciousness and pride in each and every citizen.

4 The "SAF Story" however would be incomplete if we do not mention the SAF regulars. It was that small group of regulars since the early independence period from 1965 that bore the brunt to train the early batches of national servicemen and other newly-enlisted regulars. The regulars are still shouldering this heavy and responsible task of training and leading the rest of national servicemen today. These regulars have given and will continue to give a vital contribution to the defence of our country. We recognise their worth and know that their service, be it in the Army, Air Force or Navy, make them equal to their counterparts in the business sector, public sector and industry in advancing the interest of Singapore.

5 The "SAF Story" is the story of our citizen soldiers and their contributions to the progress of Singapore. I hope that the exhibits and other artifacts will make our younger citizens, especially the school children, realise how our soldiers, sailors and airmen have contributed to give them a life full of laughter and innocence. I hope it will encourage our young full-time national servicemen to continue to maintain the high standards of combat capability. I hope it will also make our reservists proud of their contributions and further goad them to upgrade their military proficiency. To all our other Singaporeans, be they elder parent, wife, girl-friend or sister of our citizen soldiers, the "SAF Story" should give them a sense of pride and appreciation of what their men-folk have achieved.

6 The "SAF Story" should be more than a military historical exhibition or an experience of the past to share or be nostalgic about. It should evoke in all of us

Singaporeans, whether as full-time national servicemen, reservists, regulars or civilians, the resolve to continue single-mindedly to make Singapore safe and peaceful. Only then, can we be part of the continuing story of the SAF.

7 Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate everyone, both from the National Museum and the Singapore Armed Forces, who have spent many months in researching and assembling the artifacts and exhibits in order to make it possible to bring this "SAF Story" to our people.

8 I now declare open the "SAF Story" Exhibition.

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