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**SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER OF STATE (DEFENCE),
AT THE SAFRA'S 11TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND DANCE
AT THE MANDARIN HOTEL ON SATURDAY, 23 JULY 1983 AT 8 PM**

Twenty-four years ago, a people of migrant stock gained self-government. Six years later, they became an independent republic. Against great odds, they slogged it out. They had a reputation for being thrifty, frugal, hardworking, "never say die". That kind of attitude has seen them through the last two decades. Today, they have added efficiency, technical sophistication and adaptability to their list of characteristics. These people called themselves Singaporeans. They are a people proud of their nation Singapore because they made it what it is today - a progressive nation, with sound economic, political and social stability.

All that Singapore is today, is built upon blood, sweat and tears. What of the future? Can we the new Singaporeans make sure that the stability that underpins all economic growth and prosperity will not be undermined or shaken? Can we make sure that what our forefathers have built, we the present generation of Singaporeans are prepared to preserve and protect?

Our forefathers were aliens in a strange land that belonged to the colonial masters. Yet they toiled and built Singapore. We the new generation of Singapore own Singapore. How much more that we should defend what is ours.

I am confident that all Singaporeans will rise to defend Singapore should the need arise. But the willingness to rise to defend Singapore is not good enough. It is important and necessary but not good enough. A people, unfit, untrained and unpractised, rising up in arms against an adversary will be like a stampede for the exits when there is a fire in a cinema. They would just run into each other's way causing confusion and trample on each other. In a modern war, they will not stand much of a chance and will be mowed down very rapidly.

That is why our army of reservists must be fit, trained and practised at all times.

How do we make sure that our Armed Forces would be able to defend Singapore at all time?

Firstly, MINDEF and the SAF must see to the formal aspects of training of our national servicemen and reservists. We will continue to review reservist policies to make sure that annual in-camp trainings are upgraded and maximum training is achieved within this short period. We will acquire better weapon systems, upgrade operational doctrines, and introduce better methods of training and exercises.

Secondly, SAFRA must complement the activities of MINDEF. SAFRA has 107,000 members who are reservists. It can play a vital role. Through its gymnasiums, it can promote fitness activities. Through its shooting clubs, war gaming facilities and military library, it can enhance military skills and professionalism. Through its social and unit activities it can promote comradeship. But most important of all, and over and above all its activities,

SAFRA must help inculcate a sense of commitment and loyalty to the nation. To be committed and loyal to our nation is to be committed and loyal to ourselves collectively, for the nation is but the collection of all of us.

Thirdly, reservists on their part must ensure that they keep themselves fighting-fit at all times and keep abreast of new military development in areas of weapons. They should also know the latest in political, economic and military happenings in and around the region. They must not betray the trust placed upon them by their families, their friends, who look to them as their protectors.

And fourthly, all other citizens be they younger brothers and sisters, wives, girl friends, fathers, or mothers, should encourage and support wholeheartedly the efforts of our national servicemen and reservists. Because it is for them and for ourselves that national servicemen and reservists all serve, sweat and sacrifice. These concerted and complementary efforts by MINDEF, SAF, SAFRA, reservists and all Singaporeans will surely help in the strength and capability of our Armed Forces. Our objective is common - to protect our loved ones, and to preserve what we have built for them for days to come.

With so much at stake in this turbulent world, we must be prepared at all times to pay any price, bear any burden and meet any hardship to assure the survival of our nation. Together as Singaporeans we can achieve our objective.
