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**SPEECH BY DR YEO NING HONG, MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE
AT THE 14TH SCSC COURSE GRADUATION CEREMONY
AT SCSC SELETAR CAMP ON MONDAY, 1 AUG '83 AT 10.00 AM**

Let me first of all congratulate all officers of the 14th SCSC Course on their completion of the course. Presently, the SCSC represents the highest formal military course that the SAF conducts for officers on a regular basis. Officers on this course are prepared for higher command and staff positions. In other words, graduates of the SCSC, will in due course, hold positions where they will shape the progress and effectiveness of the SAF. What the SAF will be in a decade's time will depend on the quality and calibre of officers coming through the SCSC.

It is therefore of utmost importance that only the best of our SAF officers be selected for the SCSC course. The excellence of SAF officers must be broad-based, not of academic excellence only. For in the SAF, academic excellence alone is not enough. It must be complemented by excellence in military skills and knowledge. Most important of all, there must be character, the vehicle to carry all the other achievements; character as exemplified by the ability to lead, the determination to triumph against all odds, the will to endure mentally and physically and finally the commitment and dedication to the SAF and to the nation, with a willingness and preparedness to make the ultimate sacrifice. Character is an intangible quality, much more

difficult to assess than either excellence in academic achievement or military skills and knowledge. All the more, we must make every effort to assess this vital factor because it makes the critical difference between an outstanding officer and a brilliant but unsatisfactory one.

The outstanding officer in the SAF is also one who "thinks operational" in every aspect of his performance and at all times. Indeed every officer and man in the SAF must "think operational". In the past when we were putting the SAF on a firm footing, our areas of concentration of effort at different phases evolved with the times. Initially, we inherited and borrowed from other armies. The emphasis was on discipline and regimentation. Then we modified and adapted doctrines to make them appropriate to our defence requirements. Later we shifted our emphasis to proper administration of units to overcome problems created by large numbers as a result of national service. While efficient administration is important, on its own it does not make for a good armed force without adequate training. So serious and realistic training became the next focus of emphasis for officers and men in every unit. This, we have achieved to a large extent. Now, we must move on. No matter how good the training is, how smooth the administration or how good the discipline of officers and men is, the effective armed force must be one that is effective operationally. In other words, discipline, administration and training are but means to our ultimate objective - operational effectiveness.

It is not good enough to "think administration", "think proper planning" or "think serious training". It should be all these and more - to think everything that is required for operational effectiveness.

Our emphasis must be on "thinking operational" and "being operational" at all times. Unit commanders must focus their total attention to this one objective which includes all other sub-objectives which are insufficient in themselves in isolation. The attitude of our junior officers and men must also be oriented towards this objective.

The readiness of all our units must be taken seriously. Any shortcoming must be remedied as soon as possible. If such immediate remedies are not possible, because of long lead times for complete resolutions, contingency plans must be made to minimise the effect of these inadequacies. The message of "thinking operational" must percolate all the way down to the very last soldier in every one of our units.

We are now at the stage where the SAF can rise to new heights. By "thinking operational" at every level in the SAF, we can be the fighting force that the nation can truly be proud of. As the latest batch of graduates of the SCSC, you can spearhead this move and make the SAF even more effective operationally. Let us all give of our best to achieve what we are capable of - a defence force that will always ensure the peace and security of our nation.

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