

# Minister for Defence Dr Ng Eng Hen's 2022 Total Defence Day Message

 **SPEECHES** | 14 Feb 2022 18:00 (GMT+8)

February 15<sup>th</sup> is Total Defence Day. On that day, Singapore fell to the Japanese invasion and reminds us of the dreadful consequences of a weak national defence. For nearly 4 years, our people suffered under foreign occupation. This year marks the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that dark chapter in Singapore's history.

This year is also the 55<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of National Service (NS). NS is the strongest commitment to military defence – one of the key pillars of Total Defence, the backbone of the SAF to defend against any potential aggressor. This is SAF's core mission, in which it cannot fail. But Total Defence requires every Singaporean to do his or her part, if we are to overcome the enemy.

In fact, in the last two years, Singapore has indeed been putting up Total Defence, against an enemy that threatened death and destruction of our way of life. Yes, I am talking about the Covid-19 pandemic.

Dealing with Covid-19 caused many social restrictions, disrupted our lives and is stressful. A strong psychological defence is necessary to maintain mental health as well as compliance to safety measures. I am glad that Singaporeans stepped up to support each other to keep morale high in solidarity.

When supply lines were disrupted, our economic agencies rallied to keep them open especially for essential commodities. As a result of their foresight and efforts we did not suffer a shortage of these items, nor of vaccines or test kits. Economic Defence was at play and in fact, some businesses are doing even better when compared to their pre-Covid volumes.

Civil Defence was at work too, not in the usual way of rescuing people trapped in buildings, but with each of us being responsible to reduce infections, whether through wearing masks or reducing contact with others. In this regard, our safe distance ambassadors are like civil defence commanders. SAF troops and the Police too played a role in helping with contact tracing. SCDF ambulances were kept very busy transporting many Covid-19 patients when infections peaked.

There were many sterling examples of social defence as individuals and groups spontaneously reached out to help out others. They produced multi language and dialect clips to assist foreign workers and the elderly. Many acts of kindness were showered on our frontline workers, including meals and gifts to keep them going.

Digital defence was necessary against false information on vaccinations and the spread of unfounded malicious rumours. Singaporeans themselves spoke out against misleading articles and fake news.

When every Singaporean plays a part, our collective efforts form the strongest defence, that cannot be easily broken. It was because Singaporeans played their part through Total Defence against Covid-19, that we have one of the lowest death rates globally. Our economy has been kept intact and even expanded for some sectors. Our

healthcare system is not broken and our people remain united. We continue to have law and order, peace and progress for Singapore. This is the power of Total Defence in facing any threat.

As we mark Total Defence Day this year, let us reaffirm our commitment, so that together we can overcome any challenge that comes our way in the future, to continually keep Singapore safe, secure and sovereign.