

Opening Address by Mr Gan Kim Yong, Minister for Trade and Industry at the Total Defence Day Commemoration Event on 15 February 2023

Friends, residents, grassroots and our Total Defence representatives, welcome to Chua Chu Kang.

Today is our Total Defence Day. We mark this Total Defence Day every year on the 15th of February because this is the same day that Singapore fell to the Japanese some 80 years ago during the Second World War. We always mark this day, as a constant reminder to ourselves that we cannot take for granted Singapore's security, peace and stability. It is everyone's responsibility to do our part to preserve Singapore's independence and sovereignty. And as part of this, Total Defence is also an important reminder that we are in a very turbulent period. As all of you know, there is the Russia-Ukraine war ongoing, there's tension between China and USA which is intensifying and there are also supply chain disruptions from time to time.

On supply chains, many of you would have seen that the Navy's Maritime Security Task Force is here to show us what they do in peacetime. In fact, they play a very important role in keeping our sea lanes open. Not many of us know actually that the bulk of our food supply, as well as industry supplies, come through the sea lanes. So, it is important for us to maintain our connectivity even in the midst of crisis. The Navy's Maritime Security Task Force play a very important role in ensuring that.

There are also exhibits on the PUB's water wagons, as well as the Civil Defence shelter that we are in this morning. These reflect our preparedness for the various scenarios in a crisis.

Today we are also here to witness the Total Defence exercise that has been conducted. Am I am very happy to see that it is not just government agencies that are playing their part in the exercise, but the community - our students and our residents - are also participating in this exercise. I want to take this opportunity to thank all our participants who have contributed to the success of this exercise. This is a practice, and practice makes perfect.

To be prepared, we have to continue to practise and remind ourselves that we must be ready when a crisis happens. And I am very happy to say that we have been able to conduct this exercise successfully and as we learn from this exercise, we hope we will be able to scale it up so that more communities can participate in this exercise in time to come.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for being here, to participate in this Total Defence Day, and on this note, I want to remind all of us that each one of us has a role to play to continue to ensure Singapore's peace and stability, and to preserve our independence and sovereignty. So once again, thank you very much, and I wish all of you an enjoyable morning.

Thank you.