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MG Neo: Thoughts & Reflections

Story by Kelvin Kow, Jonathan Chan and Marcus Ho / Photography by Jonathan Ong, Mark Ng and Derrick Heng

On 26 March, MG Neo Kian Hong relinquished his Chief of Army appointment to BG Chan Chun Sing. He succeeds LG Desmond Kuek as the new Chief of Defence Force. These changes are part of the SAF's leadership renewal process. On this occasion, Army News interviewed MG Neo for his reflections of Our Army in the past two years.

As you prepare for your next challenge as CDF, can you share with us your thoughts on how Our Army has evolved through the years?

You know last time they used to say that the Army is like a hammer and to the Army everything is a nail – so whenever there is a problem, they hammer at it. Our Army today is not like that. We have evolved and are ready for a full spectrum of operations. While the use of highly sophisticated weapons has always been a key thrust, I am also pleased by the quality of our people today. They are more highly educated and better trained. Not only are they trained to handle the new technology, they are able to think creatively to survive on the battlefield. Today, our soldiers could be involved in some serious training, calling in artillery fire and attack helicopters; and the next day, they are performing duties at NDP. Our fast evolving security landscape has demanded that Our Army builds different capabilities to meet the various challenges. Hence our current tagline of “Ready, Relevant, Decisive”.

Which developments in the last two years would you identify as the most significant milestones that truly mark our 3rd Generation transformation?

There are many major developments that dovetailed together to create the 3rd Generation Army and these do not just happen within the last two years. Credit must go to the many people who have worked hard over the years to lay the foundation. Some people ask, “what is the difference between the 2nd Generation and 3rd Generation Army?”

There are four distinguishing elements. First and the most obvious is the introduction of ever more lethal war-fighting assets such as the Apache Attack Helicopters, Leopard Main Battle Tanks, the PRIMUS howitzer guns and the HIMARS. Second, the mobility of our forces made possible by our Chinook and the Super Puma helicopters, BIONIX Infantry Fighting Vehicles and TERREX Infantry Carrier Vehicles. Third, the enhanced protection provided to our troops. Individually, they will be equipped with body armour in their Load Bearing Vest, while the TERREX, with other

armoured vehicles, will carry them quickly and safely into the battlefield.

Finally, and most importantly, all our weapon platforms and troops are able to network for a force multiplier effect. With the Advanced Combat Man System (ACMS), you will see the soldiers rigged up with each other and with their “mothership” TERREX or BIONIX. We cannot view any equipment on its own. You must see the TERREX together with the ACMS, the individual body Armour, the Apaches, the HIMARS, and so on. This is what DPM Teo meant when he talked about how our soldiers fight with the SAF in their backpacks.

As we continue on our journey towards a World Class Army, what are the areas which you think we can do even better in?

We must continue to strengthen our organisational culture. Our people have a lot of good ideas. But if they don't interact well enough, these good ideas don't surface. We need to build a strong culture of engaging our people so that we can clarify our common purposes and better understand our challenges. When we do that, there is also ownership because everybody feels that they can contribute and everybody feels that they can understand. The calibre of the organisation will then increase significantly.

Today's generation of Singaporeans is sophisticated and intelligent. The question is how to tap this collective knowledge. The only way is to listen to our people. We are listening to our people in BMT and our NSmen, arranging some of their training programmes so that they have a part to play as well. Since 2000, Our Army has adopted the culture of a Learning Army Thinking Soldiers and we must continue to reinforce this.

How can we continue to prepare our soldiers to fully harness the full potential of our high-tech weapons and platforms?

In the past, we trained a soldier to acquire a rigid set of skills. For example, we taught him how to charge up and take

a hill, and he is trained repetitively to perform the drill. But now, we are focusing more on problem-based learning. We tell our trainees what the problem is and they will tell us how we should solve the problem. This means the trainee is thinking and developing his own ideas of how to deal with the problem. This is crucial because if the enemy knows your set drill, you will be a sitting duck. Our soldiers need to think cleverly so that they can outwit the enemy.

But having said that, I also stress that our soldiers must first develop and possess deep competency in their respective weapon platforms and war-fighting skills. We have restructured our training schools and equipped the instructors to better achieve this.

The professional development of our Regular force is a topic close to your heart. Can you share with us your thoughts on how Our Army can strive to attract and retain the best talents?

The profile of our people is changing. Competition for regulars has become tighter. We must be aware of the evolving labour market and continue to present an attractive career proposition to retain our fair share of talent. Our Army is committed to our people, and adopts best practices for its manpower policies.

We have recently enhanced the career schemes for our Regulars. Our officers are our systems leaders and we have extended their retirement age to 50 to fully tap their experience. The warrant officers are our leaders of the close-in battle. We are re-designing their jobs and enlarging their responsibilities and professional space to further strengthen the Officer-Warrant Officer partnership. The new 3WO rank will help to re-focus the WOSE Corps into a Warrant Officer Corps. Finally, the Military Domain Expert Scheme, or MDES will help Our Army to support its technologically-complex 3rd Generation systems.

Do you have any concluding thoughts to share with the Army community?

We're here for the defence and security of our nation. There's no question that that is our primary mission. But there is a side-effect because every male citizen comes through our door. If we train them well, we will have cohesion in society and confidence in one another as well as the leaders. So on top of defence and security, we are training the whole fighting spirit of the nation, so that we can define our future and determine our way of life. That is a much bigger idea than this military.

What Others Say About Him

COL Ngien Hoon Ping
Commander CSSCOM

COA strikes me as a man of integrity and sincerity who is not only committed to the mission, but to helping his people learn and grow. He creates learning and sharing opportunities in every exercise we are involved in. He is both decisive and open-minded. He allows us to propose ideas and own our decisions for Army's behalf. He will support you if he sees that you are capable of executing your plan, are genuinely passionate about it and that the plan is potentially good for Our Army. He is a strong champion of innovation and believes that giving us a certain level of autonomy will help foster a stronger sense of ownership in Our Army.



LTC (VOL) Sum Chee Peng
Served as Division Medical Officer when COA was Comd 9 DIV

On their first encounter with COA, many people may think that he isn't very approachable. But once you have earned his respect, he will be very supportive of you. During the SARS outbreak, my brigade medical officers and doctors from 9 DIV decided that reporting sick soldiers who had symptoms of cough and fever should be isolated to prevent possible spread of SARS to other reporting sick personnel. As such, I allowed them to erect tents in front of the medical centre. However, some doctors thought that such a move was an overkill. Not COA though. Once he understood why we did it, he supported us.



LTC (NS) Mohammed Ismail
Was Company 2IC when COA was Company OC

MG Neo is very meticulous when it comes to missions, exercises and competitions. He defines his objectives very clearly and he is very focused. He leads by example and can connect very well with his men as the OC. He did not enjoy any special comforts in the field and had whatever the men had. But despite his serious nature, he is also very friendly to his men during relaxation times. When I was CO 596 SIR, he took great interest in my unit's ATEC evaluation and gave us very good advice on how to achieve better results.



MWO Tamizh Kannan
OC G Coy, INSTWOSPEC
Was Operations Warrant Officer 7 SIB when COA was CO 1 Guards



He is very particular about their physical fitness and when he was CO of 1 Guards, he enforced the morning 5BX seriously. Of course, he was also there doing it along with the men, clearly leading by example.

MG Neo exemplifies a true professional soldier. He knows exactly what he wants and gives very clear instructions to his men. He will follow up on whatever he says he will do. Although he is a strict person, he cares a lot for his men and their welfare.

MWO Thian Wei Kong
Operations Warrant Officer, National Service Centre (NSC), HQ Guards
Served as COA's RSM in 1st Battalion Singapore Guards

Although he is a strict and serious person, he cares a lot for his men, and has often helped those with financial or family problems. He visited training sessions often to understand their difficulties and issues. On Chinese New Year he even gave all his men red packets, each with a one-dollar coin, from his own pocket money. I also recall that he is very particular about physical fitness and enforced the 5 BX seriously.



Ms Boey Hsu Hsien
DY G1 (PFM)
HQ 9 DIV/INF
Served as Hd NSHRC when COA was Comd 9 DIV



control. He is also a very caring commander. There was one evening when after a late evening meeting, I went back to my office and was very surprised to receive an email from him ordering me to go home to rest. I was also pleasantly surprised when he dropped by to greet me at the last SAF Commanders' Sports Day.

MG Neo believes in getting the "best person for the right job" so that he or she can perform effectively and contribute to the organisation. In 9 DIV, he helped to shape the NS HR structure by proposing a matrix that allows a balance between specialisation and command and

COL (VOL) Koh Piak Huat
Worked with COA during the SARS crisis



For many years in the Army, I was known as being hard-working, but I was no match for COA's drive and commitment. What distinguished him as a true commander in this crisis was his ability to bridge the gap between the strategic objectives and tactical actions with his gift in operational-level thinking and learning. He framed the issues, built the team, created the systems and networked across inter-ministry machineries in making policies and measures work on the ground.

LTC Fadzully bin Abas
Deputy Commander, Infantry Training Institute
Served with COA in the International Force for East Timor



Under COA's leadership, we showed our professionalism and preparedness in all aspects of the mission and were respected by the rest of the international forces. I vividly remember flying into Darwin with very little knowledge of what we needed to do. But with his mission-focused attitude, we were able to piece information together quickly for us to successfully deploy our medical team, Landing Ship Tanks and C-130 aircraft in a short duration. We also appreciated his efforts in personally communicating and reassuring our family members back home.

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CPL Glenn Choo
Admin Supervisor, COA Office

He is a gentleman who is filled with humility, care and concern for the people around him. On two occasions he expressed concern for my colleague's dietary restrictions. I even learnt some interesting insights on parenting when he once said, “Kids are not like computers. When you press a button, the computers will tell you the answer immediately. For kids, you have to wait for one to two hours before they slowly tell you stuff.”



Dawn Reflections at Marina Barrage

Story by Marcus Ho / Photography by Mark Ng

The dawn of 9 February 2010 will always be etched in the memories of the latest batch of recruits from the 40th Battalion, Singapore Armoured Regiment (40 SAR). At this unearthly hour when majority of the population were still sound asleep, they assembled on the roof garden of the Marina Barrage for their weapon presentation ceremony. As they received their SAR 21 rifles at the first ever such ceremony held at Marina Barrage, the significance of the venue and its surrounding would have easily dawned on the recruits.

“We chose the Marina Barrage for two reasons,” explained LTC Goh Si Mien, Commanding Officer of 40 SAR. “As the weapon presentation ceremony is an important rite of passage for the recruits, we wanted to take the opportunity and engage them at a deeper level. Firstly, the recruits will be able to see the modern Singapore skyline right before them as they receive their rifles. To their sides, they can see the bustling port activities and the residential estates. This visual representation of the modern Singapore will give them a better sense of whom and what they are taking up arms for, and that the defence of our country is now firmly in their hands.”

“Secondly, we wanted the recruits to feel the uniqueness of the Singapore spirit, which is our ability to overcome adversity with creativity and plenty of hard work. Water supply has always been one of our challenges, and the Marina Barrage is a manifestation of how Singapore has risen to the challenge to turn our limitations into opportunities. This Singapore spirit is what each recruit will have to call upon to overcome the challenges that will come their way during their NS journey.”

And indeed for the recruits, this event has given them a fresh perspective on the importance of National Service. REC Shawn Tan commented, “This is a really new experience for us as compared to receiving our rifles at our camp’s parade square. I felt that I could really connect to what LTC Goh was talking about as he explained to us the hardships that our forefathers went through when Singapore was still a third world



REC Tan (left) felt that the event had enabled him to better appreciate the importance of National Service

country. I now feel that I have a bigger role to play as a soldier and citizen of Singapore. I’ll do whatever it takes to keep our country safe.”

His sentiments were echoed by REC Varun Varman, originally from India and who only received his citizenship two years ago while representing the Singapore national cricket team. He said, “As a foreigner, initially I didn’t have a positive outlook on National Service, but coming here has given me a totally new perspective of the meaning behind it. Even though

I wasn’t born here, Singapore is now my home, and I will not let anyone else take away from us the peace that my fellow Singaporeans enjoy.”

The event was also a time of reflections for the commanders. As 2LT Joel Li, a Platoon Commander aptly summed up “It is very significant to present the rifles to my men at Marina Barrage, not only for them but for myself as well. Coming here allows me to visually relate to what I am training my men for everyday, so it’s another motivational booster.”

Quick Thinking Averts Nasty Accident

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Mark Ng

Recently, the road just outside the SAF Ferry Terminal witnessed an accident that could have been a lot worse if not

for the quick reaction of LCP Mohammed Haidhar, a Regimental Policeman at the SAF Ferry Terminal.



LCP Haidhar’s quick thinking saves Mr Tan from a nasty accident

On Wednesday, 3 February, LCP Haidhar was manning the guardpost at the ferry terminal, checking cars for proper access authorisation into the area. Just then, Mr Andy Tan, an Associate Engineer with ST Electronics who was working on an IT project on Pulau Tekong, was leaving the ferry terminal on his motorcycle. Unfortunately for him, a car col-

lided into his vehicle just outside the guardpost, leaving him sprawled on the road and unable to move. The next few moments were critical as traffic was heavy and Mr Tan could be hit by oncoming vehicles.

LCP Haidhar recounted, “I saw Mr Tan lying on the road and I was concerned that oncoming vehicles might run over him. I immediately moved in front of him to redirect traffic to prevent this.” LCP Haidhar then moved Mr Tan and his vehicle to the side and waited for Mr Tan to recover sufficiently before returning to his post.

A grateful Mr Tan wrote to Our Army to commend LCP Haidhar for his vigilance and quick reaction. A bashful LCP Haidhar downplayed his actions and added, “I simply saw someone in need of help so I helped him. I’m sure anyone would have done the same in my place.”

Armour Family Day Builds Cohesion

Story by Marcus Ho / Photographs courtesy of Armour Training Institute

On a bright Saturday afternoon on 23 January, the HQ National Cadet Corps premises in Amoy Quee Camp was filled with fun and merriment as servicemen from the Armour formation and their family members gathered for the Armour Family Day. Organised by the Armour Training Institute, those present participated in many enjoyable activities such as archery and paintball. The competitive spirit involved in these activities led to a greater bonding among the servicemen. Chief Armour Officer, COL Benedict Lim was present with his family members.

“I particularly enjoyed archery the most,” shared CPT Tan Teck Kim, a Company Trainer from Armour Battlegroup Training Centre. “I’ve never tried archery before, so the experience was extremely refreshing. I also took the opportunity to know my fellow soldiers from the various Armour units better, so the work processes will be a lot smoother and enjoyable in future when we work together.”

A highlight of the programme was the display of the Leopard 2A4 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs), the SM-1 and the Bio-nix II. Excited guests boarded the vehicles to get a first-hand experience of the vehicle interiors in which their loved ones and friends train in. Ms Jessica Hoo, whose boyfriend serves in the Armour Formation commented, “I’m glad to be able to come down and see what the 3rd Generation Army is all about. As a girl, I don’t really have many chances to look at our Army’s capabilities. Today, I learnt about the various types of tanks and even boarded them for a hands-on feel. I now have a better understanding of what my boyfriend deals with everyday. I also feel very assured knowing that our Army is so well-equipped.”

Retirees from the Armour Formation were also present. SSG Sze Wee Ming, a Company Sergeant Major from the 48th Battalion, Singapore Armoured Regiment shared his takeaways from the interactions with them, “The retired per-

sonnel were sharing stories of how challenging it was for them to operate the AMX-13, which was Singapore’s first generation of tanks. Through their stories, I’ve better understood the capabilities of the Leopard 2A4 MBTs. I’ll certainly cherish our current equipment and capabilities even more.”

The event culminated with the SAF Music and Drama Company wowing the crowd with their expansive repertoire of melodious delights. Food specially prepared by the Singapore Food Industries filled the empty stomachs as well. SSG Sze added, “Not only did we have a lot of fun throughout the event, but we also got to know my fellow Armour colleagues and their families better. It was truly a memorable day for the Armour Family!”



Participants enjoying themselves thoroughly with the wide range of activities

BMTC Celebrates 2009 Achievements with Gala Day

Story by Marcus Ho / Photographs courtesy of HQ BMTC

2009 was an eventful year for the staff at Basic Military Training Centre (BMTC), witnessing numerous enhancements to the training curriculum, infrastructure and the inauguration of BMTC School 3. To mark these achievements and milestones, and to recognise the relentless effort of the staff, the BMTC Gala Family Day was held at the SAFRA Jurong Clubhouse on 9 January. CPT Michael Lui, Officer Commanding for Ninja Company who was the Deputy Chairman



A splashing good way to foster greater cohesion among the BMTC staff

of the event’s organising committee elaborated, “The Gala Family Day was held for the staff of BMTC to express our appreciation for one another, and also for them to know each other better in an activity-based setting as opposed to the normal office-based settings. This is one of the ways that will allow them to bond effectively and foster greater cohesion.”

Participants enjoyed a wide variety of activities throughout the day, including outdoor games such as tug-of-war and indoor ones like pool and computer games. “I enjoyed the tug-of-war match the most,” said 3SG Emilio Jose Arriola, a Section Commander from Mohawk Company. “I got to know the staff from other companies a lot better. It was also one of the few activities that managed to turn the normally quiet people into loud-mouths.”

For LCP Yang Qingjie, a storeman from Mohawk Company, the karaoke session was a revitalising experience. He said, “The Gala Family Day was a good opportunity for us to take a breather from work and just enjoy ourselves. I love singing, but I don’t go to karaoke often since it can be quite expensive. I think the organising committee has done an excellent job to engage all of us. I feel that it is also good for us to go out and know one another better, since we don’t usually have time for

that. On weekends, we normally go out with our family and other friends.”

The day concluded with a sumptuous lunch, a lucky draw contest and an address by Commander BMTC, COL Chan Wei Gan. 3SG Emilio summed up, “I feel that I know my peers a lot better now. This will not only smoothen our working relations with one another, but it is also a huge motivation boost since BMTC has become more like my first home.”



Games such as pool were available for those who preferred to stay indoors

I Will, We Will

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Jonathan Ong / Cover Design by Jonathan Ong

For many people, 15 February this year was spent in joyous celebration of the Lunar New Year, meeting friends and family members or simply enjoying the public holiday. But on that very same day in 1942, British forces defending Singapore surrendered to the invading Japanese forces, an event that was described as 'the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history' by then Prime Minister Winston Churchill. What followed in the next three years was unspeakable hardship and suffering for Singaporeans of all races. Today, 68 years on, Singapore is prosperous and thriving, but ever mindful that we cannot take security for granted and that everyone has a role to play in defending our country. And this is the reason why we celebrate Total Defence Day on 15 February every year.

In last year's Total Defence campaign, Singaporeans reflected on the question "What will you defend?" This year, they were called to action with the theme, "I Will" - a personal pledge to do something to defend our nation through the five pillars of Psychological, Social, Military, Economic and Civil Defence. These pledges are valuable expressions of their commitments to defence, and collectively, they signify a strength born of unity as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean said, "When taken together, the many 'I Will's become 'We Will'. It is only when we come together with a shared goal and pool our resources into a common effort that we can overcome any challenge or threat." DPM Teo was speaking at the Total Defence Commemoration Day



DPM Teo speaking to the team from the School of the Arts which won 2nd place at this year's N.E.mation!

event held at Nanyang Polytechnic on 11 February.

At the event, numerous exhibitions that demonstrated Singaporeans' pledges to defend the country were on show, amongst which was a specially commissioned art installation comprising five intricately sculpted stainless steel letters spelling out the words 'I Will'. Commenting on its significance, Casey Chen, the artist behind the installation said, "Every Singaporean is an integral part of Singapore. We live, work and play in this country and it will take every individual's commitment to protect our unique way of life. And this is what the sculpture celebrates - our collective will to defend all things dear to us in Singapore."

Also featured at the event were some of the top entries in this year's N.E.mation!, a competition for youths to express

"as The Minister for Defence, I will ensure That The SAF is always operationally ready, so That Singaporeans can continue To enjoy The peace and prosperity we have Today"

- Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Teo Chee Hean



Chief of Army MG Neo Kian Hong (right) also attended the commemoration event and wrote his 'I Will' pledge

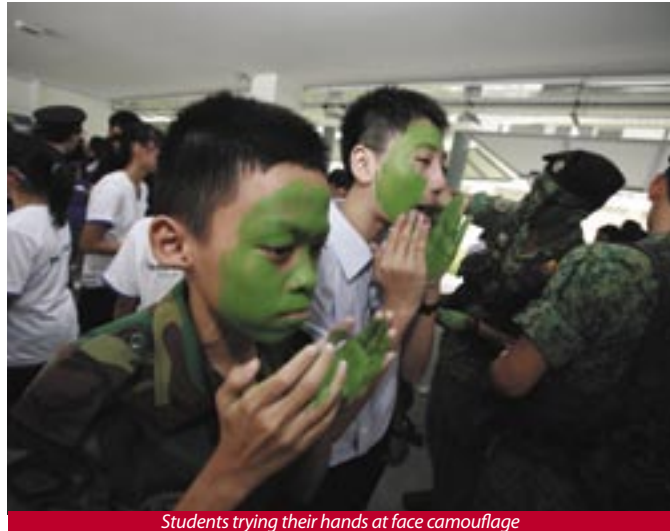
their thoughts on Total Defence through animation. Since its inception in 2007, the competition has attracted 3,200 student participants. Students were given training in animation to express their stories in one-minute animation clips for public viewing and voting. One such clip used rice, a food staple for many Singaporeans, to demonstrate how that simple grain is used by all four main races in Singapore to show their care for others. The clip was produced by a team from the School of the Arts and won 2nd prize. Erica Heng, a team member, shared her feelings on Total Defence, "I think Total Defence is important because it is a reminder that we cannot take Singapore for granted and that everybody must do their part. For my teammates and myself, we've pledged to save Singapore's environment by taking more public transport. For example, we took a bus to this event!"

Total Defence is about all Singaporeans committing to defend their nation in their own special way for the sake of themselves and their loved ones. As DPM Teo said, "Make a little pledge, as we commemorate Total Defence Day, to show that you care, for your family, for your friends, for Singapore. As for what I will do, as the Minister for Defence, I will ensure that the SAF is always operationally ready, so that Singaporeans can continue to enjoy the peace and prosperity we have today. Let us all also make our pledge and act on it."

20 SA Commemorates TD With Students

Story by Marcus Ho / Photography by Jonathan Ong

It was a unique sight for the students of Manjusri Secondary School as more than 90 servicemen from 20th Battalion, Singapore Artillery (20 SA) made a debut on the school compound on 10 February as part of the school's week-long Total Defence programme. During this event, the students were given a glimpse of the life in Our Army. Some students tried their hands at face camouflaging while others sampled the combat rations. The students also had the opportunity to get up close and personal with the Field Howitzer 2000 and Field Howitzer 88 (FH 88) operated by 20 SA.



Students trying their hands at face camouflage

Elaborating on the importance of engaging the students with hands-on activities, Mr Chew Ee, a teacher and the school's National Education Coordinator said, "Most Singaporeans today tend to be quite complacent since they have been living through an era of prosperity. They have never lived through the turbulent periods during the 1960s, so many people can hardly relate when it comes to understanding the importance of serving the nation. Having hands-on activities like these will definitely complement the National Education classes in the classroom."

Mr CHew's fellow colleague, Mr Keith Koh who is the school's Head of Department for Physical Education, Co-Curricular Activities and Aesthetics echoed his sentiments. He said, "After the visit by 20 SA, I realised that our students now have a better understanding of what military life is all about, rather than having the stereotypical perspective that military is just about foot drills. I believe they also have a greater confidence in our Army."

Seah Kai Fong, a student commented, "I am very impressed to see how well-equipped our Army is. I particularly enjoyed going up on the FH 88 since I've always been interested in the artillery aspect of our Army, and the soldier was very knowledgeable when he explained how the FH 88 works. The other soldiers were also sharing stories from their overseas exercises, and how fulfilling it felt for them to be training so hard. I also feel very relieved to know that our country is protected by such a strong and well-equipped Army."

For the female students, this event has also helped them to understand the capability of our 3rd Generation Army. Jessica Lim said, "My father shares a lot of stories from his Army life, but this is the first time that I can see the various types of weapons and equipment. As a citizen of Singapore, I feel very safe since now I know for sure that our Army is strong enough to deter any threats to our country. I've also learnt how the SAF



Seah Kai Fong checking out the FH 88

soldiers keep themselves physically fit through the Individual Physical Proficiency Test."

The students were not the only ones who had benefited from the event. MAJ Tong Chin Hong, Commanding Officer of 20 SA explained, "Visiting Manjusri Secondary School has enabled us to gain a deeper understanding of why we are training, and who we are trying to defend everyday. After their interactions with the students and teachers, I can see that my men are now even more motivated to serve the country."

2LT Kenny Soo, an Artillery Officer of 20 SA added, "After the event, I could see there is a certain level of confidence from the students in Our Army. I believe they now understand that we are the reason why they can safely go to school everyday. And knowing all these has motivated me even more as a commander to train harder."

"I will serve my country To the best of my abilities!"

- REC Santhes Kumaran, Trainee, 40th Battalion, Singapore Armoured Regiment

"I will continue to engage and foster good relationship with my neighbours regardless of race or religion."

- MSG Lim Seow Ping, Armour Technician, HQ Maintenance and Engineering Support

Standby Duties On Total Defence Day

Story contributed by HQ 1 GDS

Sunday, 15 February 1942, was not only the first day of Chinese New Year. It was also the day Singapore surrendered unconditionally to Japan after putting up a week of tough resistance. To remind Singaporeans that they should never allow history to repeat itself, Total Defence Day has been comannually memorated on this day.

For the men of 1st Guards Battalion (1 GDS), this year's Total Defence Day possessed even more significance as they were entrusted with performing standby duties during the Chinese New Year period, exactly 68 years after the fall of Singapore in

World War II. During this festive period, the unit also organised a series of activities to remind its soldiers of the important role that they play in Total Defence.

In the week leading up to Total Defence Day, soldiers from all ranks and file were furnished with a daily account of what took place during the week before Singapore fell. Starting with an account of the landing of the Japanese troops, our soldiers were told stories in vivid details of actual events that occurred in 1942, so that they could better relate to what Singaporeans then experienced during the war. The force commander would

conclude each day's story with a firm message - that we should never depend on others to defend our own land.

On 15 February, the men were activated for "action" to test their preparedness. A full inspection was carried out to ensure that the troops were ready for deployment, before a simple yet solemn ceremony to commemorate Total Defence was held. During the ceremony, LTC Tan Cheng Kwee, Commanding Officer of 1 GDS delivered the Total Defence message and reinforced the importance of national service. He also led the soldiers in reciting the SAF pledge to reaffirm their commitment to defend Singapore. The ceremony ended with the soldiers singing the national anthem proudly.

The soldiers found the event meaningful and thought-provoking. LCP Chue Eng Hwee, a storeman from 1 GDS shared, "I can now better understand how our stand by duties contribute to the overall defence posture. To put it simply, my families and friends can enjoy Chinese New Year in peace because of what we are doing here."

For these Guardsmen, the occasion was also a memorable one. They will soon complete their long and gruelling 2-year journey, bringing a meaningful and bittersweet conclusion to

their full-time soldiering experience. They have indeed lived up to their motto, "Earn it!"



1 GDS soldiers performing stand by duties on Total Defence Day

More RECORD V Recommendations Implemented

Story by Marcus Ho / Photography by Jonathan Ong



Last September, the Government accepted all the 18 recommendations made by the Fifth Committee to Recognise the Contribution of Operationally Ready National Servicemen to Total Defence (RECORD V) committee (see Issue No. 169 – Recognising NSmen with More Perks). These 18 recommendations are in appreciation of the NSmen's sacrifices in defending our nation, and were made after extensive discussions and consultations with NSmen, their spouses and employers on ways to better recognise their contributions.

About half of these 18 recommendations have already been implemented, including enhanced rank increments and increased combat allowance. Of the remaining recommendations, the IPPT-in-Your-Community and advance eMart credit system have just been implemented.

IPPT-in-Your-Community

Ten fitness corners within the town councils of Bishan-Toa Payoh, Sembawang, Tampines, Tanjong Pagar and West Coast will be enhanced for NSmen to conveniently train for their Individual Physical Proficiency Test (IPPT). These fitness corners include training facilities for the various IPPT requirements, such as sit-up, chin-up, shuttle run and standing broad jump. Running routes will also be clearly demarcated for 2.4-kilometre run. The first site at



A/P Koo (second from right) watches as 3SG (NS) Asis demonstrates the sit-up workout

Hillock Park in Bukit Purmei was launched on 3 March by Minister of State for Defence Associate Professor Koo Tsai Kee, while the remaining sites will be rolled out progressively by June this year.



These enhanced fitness corners will certainly go a long way in helping NSmen to better prepare themselves. 3SG (NS) Fadly Asis, a Section Commander from 702nd Battalion, Singapore Guards (702 GDS) was pleased with the latest initiative and said, "In the past, I would try to keep fit after work by running for about two kilometres or playing soccer. However, I was unable to do this regularly due to my hectic work schedule and other commitments. With this new training facility just under my block, I can now try to aim for gold in IPPT since it is so much more convenient for me to train. Furthermore, since the 2.4-kilometre route is demarcated, I can pace my run to achieve a faster timing."

Advance eMart Credit System

The Advance eMart Credit System was recently introduced to provide greater flexibility for NSmen to purchase new personal equipment. This allows NSmen to draw an advanced credit of up to 113 points from their next top-up



cycle, which occurs every two years. Chief Supply Officer, COL Lam Sheau Kai who mooted the idea shared the rationale behind this initiative, "We gathered feedback from our NSmen and understood their need for more credit points during the initial cycle of Operationally Ready National Service (ORNS). Our study also showed that the personal equipment replacement rate is higher in the initial years of ORNS and abates gradually towards the end. With these considerations in mind, we have developed the Advance eMart Credit System."

One NSman who already benefited from this initiative is 3SG (NS) Low Swee Tat, Section Commander from 667th Battalion, Singapore Infantry Regiment (667 SIR). He commented, "Previously, I had to fork out cash to replace some of my personal equipment such as socks and PT attire. With the Advance eMart Credit System, I can save my money and draw future credit points to pay for my purchases especially for the more expensive items."

For more information on RECORD V and the other initiatives, visit the Internet website at www.mindef.gov.sg/record



The Advance eMart Credit System initiative will help NSmen meet their needs for new equipment during the initial years of new ORNS cycle

622 SIR Stands Down!

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Samuel Cheam and Mark Ng



"622 Stand down!" With these simple words shouted by the parade commander, the men of the 622nd Singapore Infantry Regiment (622 SIR) officially entered MINDEF Reserve, marking an end to 12 years of National Service (NS). The emotional stand down parade was attended by the families of these NSmen who came to recognise the many years of service that their fathers, husbands and sons gave to their country. Army News was there to share 622 SIR's moment of pride and joy.

CPL (NS) Beng Bok Khim and CPL (NS) Desmond Tan have been buddies since their full-time NS days. The two Infantry Pioneers have been with 622 SIR right from the start of the battalion's NS journey. Since then, both men have seen the Army change and grow. It is an impressive transformation as CPL (NS) Tan shared, "I think the USMS system is a brilliant idea. It allows the men on the ground who use new equipment to give feedback that leads to less wastage and better utilisation of human resources. But most importantly I think it reflects how the Army is really listening to the people and this bottom-up approach is a step forward." For CPL (NS) Beng, he was impressed with the Army's numerous welfare initiatives for NSmen, "There's definitely a greater focus on welfare, the new Infantry Training Institute has much better accommodations, the food has improved and the E-mart provides easy access to Army equipment."

For CPL (NS) Tan, seeing his old NS buddies at each In-Camp Training (ICT) was a rewarding experience. He commented, "After reaching your Operationally Ready Date you don't really see your full-time buddies as much. These are guys you've lived with day in and day out for two and a half years so its always really good to see them at ICTs to catch up and see where life has taken them." Becoming a soldier for one or two weeks every year is not easy for people who are accustomed to civilian life, but CPL (NS) Beng feels that his time as a



NS buddies CPL Beng (left) and CPL Tan finishing their NS journey together

CPL (NS) Farid Conviction and Purpose

Story by Marcus Ho / Photography by Jonathan Ong

"I know this may sound crazy, but I simply love to serve the nation." began CPL (NS) Mohamed Farid. Affirmation of this declaration is strongly evident in the 39-year-old NSman's decision to extend his Operationally Ready National Service. He added, "I love going back to In-Camp Trainings (ICTs) for a few reasons. I've always enjoyed being in a group with a certain level of regimentation. When I was in National Cadet Corps in Secondary School, I learnt a lot about Our Army and ever since then, somehow I always feel a sense of inexplicable pride every time I put on the uniform."

While CPL (NS) Farid was a Military Police (MP) during his NSF days, he was re-vocated as a Transport Operator (driver) due to organisational needs. And for him, going to ICT is similar to taking a break from his civilian work. CPL (NS) Farid explained, "As a customer engineer, which is quite similar to the job of a customer service officer, the work can be especially stressful at times because I am constantly cracking my head for solutions for my customers whenever they are faced with problems. However, as a driver, all I have to do is to focus on my given tasks. It's a great time to just stop thinking about work, so I can be a lot more productive when I go back to my office again."

In his unit, CPL (NS) Farid is well regarded as a self-motivated and dedicated soldier. CPT (NS) Frisbie Lim, Officer Commanding 1 GSTB has nothing but praise for him. He commented, "CPL (NS) Farid is often seen as a role model amongst his peers, and is always volunteering to help. For example, during field training exercises, he will often help his peers to camouflage and park the vehicles, and maintain good field discipline so that the field objective of the unit is always achieved. It's always a pleasure to see him at every ICT!"

Despite the many accolades received, a modest CPL (NS) Farid still has his feet firmly planted on the ground. He revealed why he is passionate in serving, "We should not just be serving NS because it is necessary. I feel that we must believe in the purpose behind it. As an NSman, every year, we take out about two weeks of our lives to serve the nation. Such sacrifice is relatively small since there are 52 weeks a year. And since we have NS by law, we might as well make the best of our time and contribute as much as possible."

National Service has also inculcated CPL (NS) Farid with numerous positive values. He shared, "NS has provided me with a lot of relevant life skills. For instance, back when I was

NSman has not gone to waste, "During ICT you do a lot of challenging things that you don't do in your civilian life but ultimately NS has been a test for myself. Completing it has given me confidence to overcome problems in life."

It has been a long and memorable journey for LTC (NS) Lee Hock Soon, Commanding Officer of 622 SIR. A former regular, LTC (NS) Lee witnessed the battalion's growth over the years, "During their full-time days, the unit wasn't quite up to par but they've made huge improvements over the years. These improvements have culminated in 622 SIR winning the Best NS Unit award for three consecutive years from 2007 to 2009." LTC (NS) Lee attributed the success of the unit to the spirit and determination of his men from the officers down to the last private, "All my commanders from the Principal Staff Officers down to the section commanders are highly motivated and strive to do their best. But there's no point having good leaders without keen followers. Thankfully most of the men are on the ball. For example their ATEC Stage Two Evaluation which lasted four days and three nights was extremely difficult for NSmen who are teachers, insurance agents and so on in their civilian lives. But the fact that we did well is a testament to their determination." As LTC (NS) Lee continues his NS journey, he fondly recalled his time with 622 SIR, "The initial years were tough but today 622 SIR is a fully proficient unit and it has been a thoroughly enjoyable experience with them."

Outfield exercises in Pulau Tekong, sleeping in the jungle, and spotting wild boars. These are just some of the many NS memories that 3SG (NS) Bernard Low, a section commander with 622 SIR's Infantry Pioneers, will continue to cherish. 3SG (NS) Low believes that the strength of the unit lies in the spirit of camaraderie among the men, "We may not all be as physically fit as when we were young but everyone gives their best during ICTs and we all help each other out. For example during route marches, we have to carry heavy loads across a long distance and it is common to see people volunteering to take on their buddies' load just to give them a rest." 3SG (NS) Low shared his main takeaway after 12 years of service, "NS is a unique experience because you meet people from different backgrounds, people whom you might not otherwise meet at work or amongst your social circles. For me, it has been a very good learning experience getting to know different people and learning about each others' lives. In NS you start off during your full-time days as complete strangers, and 12 years on you're fast friends and that's definitely valuable."

an MP in my NSF days, we had to maintain a high level of self-discipline because we were like the guardians of the SAF. We had to be good role models so that the rest can follow. As such, we had to present ourselves very professionally such as speaking in a politically correct manner. Similarly in my civilian job, I deal with plenty of difficult customers, but I can't let my frustrations get the better of me."

In addition, CPL (NS) Farid feels that National Service is also a great avenue to expand his social network. "In today's society, having a wide social network is crucial to achieving success in life," he commented. "A lot of business opportunities can be found if you know the right people. I remember one of my fellow peers who made numerous car sales just through his friends from NS. As for me, I got to know people from a wide range of professions, and I know they will certainly help me if I encounter any problems. I also regularly play soccer with my friends from NS."



CPL (NS) Farid looks forward to every ICT as a great learning and networking experience

ACE for Recruitment and Engagement

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Jonathan Ong and Samuel Cheam

As the SAF continues its 3rd Generation transformation journey, the need for top-class people who are ready to commit to a rewarding military career becomes even more important. With that in mind, the theme of this year's Armed Forces Careers Experience (ACE) event was 'Transform your Future'. Organised by the recruitment centres of all three Services, the recruitment event was held from 25 to 28 February at Marina Square Shopping Centre's central atrium.

The annual event was an excellent opportunity for those interested in a military career to find out more about the many opportunities in the SAF. This year's event was indeed an interesting and fruitful experience for the many visitors in the light of the recently introduced new career schemes for Officers, Warrant Officers and Military Domain Experts (MDES). Besides its recruitment objective, the 4-day event also aimed to acquaint the public with the latest developments in the 3rd Generation SAF by showcasing our advanced technology and training.



This year's ACE provided many hands-on opportunities to help visitors better understand our 3rd Generation Army

CPT Karen Teo, a Signals officer who was manning the Signals booth felt that efforts like ACE are important engagement tools for the SAF. "Events like ACE are important because they help us educate people about the SAF," said CPT Teo, "The Internet is a good source of information but sometimes there's just too much to digest, so ACE allows us to explain this information in a more personal way by sharing our experiences." CPT Teo felt that this was of particular importance for women who are interested in a SAF career because they do not undergo National Service unlike their male counterparts and hence might not know much about military life. Tracy Thng, 20, was one such lady who benefited from ACE. She said, "Coming here has helped me to better understand what my guy friends go through in NS. Also it has given me more details about the different formations and which one I might be most suited to."

CPT Umanathan Naidu, the Deputy S1 at the 7th Singapore Infantry Brigade, who was promoting the Guards formation also found ACE a useful way of reaching out to interested members of the public. He also felt it was a great opportunity to showcase some of the SAF's achievements over the years, "It's good for us to tell the public what we've done over the past few years. At ACE, some of the booths tell stories of our operations overseas, for example the Guards booth has information about our involvement in Timor Leste relief efforts. These stories of our successful operations help assure the public that the SAF is ready for any scenario."

To engage the public and enhance their confidence, static displays from various Army units were set up in the heart of the busy Marina Square shopping centre. Some, like the Infantry, Guards and Commandos, brought their weapons for the public to have a hands-on feel. Others displayed their systems and special equipment, for example the Intelligence for-



Soldiers demonstrating their close combat skills to an enraptured audience

mation brought a Mini-Unmanned Aerial Vehicle while the Military Police exhibited their forensic investigation tools.

Several games and entertainment activities were also organised to give the event a light-hearted and fun atmosphere. These included a high-octane demonstration of close combat skills by Army Fitness Centre trainers, and a display of drug-detection capability by the Military Police Command's dog unit. The SAF's Music and Drama company was also present throughout to entertain the public with various musical performances.

The event was a success which left visitors with an enhanced understanding of the SAF. Ng Zhi Kai, a 17-year old student who found ACE both informative and interesting shared, "All the exhibits and booth are very detailed and I've learnt a lot of things about the SAF I didn't previously know. The servicemen here are all very helpful and willing to talk about their experiences in the military." CPT Aw Wen Wei from the Army Recruitment Centre, revealed that the number of applications received at this year's ACE was also significantly higher than previous years, an encouraging sign of increased public interest in the SAF.



The forensic tools of the Military Police attracted great public interest

MSG Abdul Rashid is loving every minute of his life in Our Army. Army News spoke to him to find out more.



Why did you choose to sign on with the Army?

The Army offers opportunities for adventure that no other profession can provide. And my love for adventure led me to sign on with the Army. Another huge draw was the chance to go for exciting overseas training in countries such as Australia and the United States.

What are some of the defining moments in your career so far?

Last year I was involved in an HADR mission where SAF personnel went to assist Indonesians suffering from the aftermath of the Sumatran earthquake. There I was responsible for maintaining the vehicles that used in the reconstruction and aid efforts. Being overseas on real operations and helping the victims of the earthquake was an amazing experience that is very fulfilling and hard to describe.

What kind of qualities should a person have if he or she wants to sign on?

Open mindedness and being prepared for anything. When I went on the HADR mission, I was given very short notice and had to move fast. When you're in the army you have to be ready for anything.

New Trolley

Simple and Effective

Story by Samuel Cheam / Photography by Derrick Heng

These concerns motivated Mr Choo Cheow Heng, a System Management Warrant in 6 AMB, to develop a new U-shaped trolley for the gas cylinders which saves time and reduces the likelihood of accidents.

Mr Choo's keen eyes detected several flaws as he explained, "I observed the technicians using the old trolley to transfer the nitrogen cylinders to the vehicle. It was a slow and tedious process and one that was potentially hazardous. As such I decided to look for a better solution."

Previously, an A-frame trolley was used to wheel the heavy cylinders around. But its unwieldy and bulky design prevented it from be-

ing uploaded onto the vehicle together with the cylinder. Three maintenance personnel were needed to lift the cylinder from the old trolley onto the vehicle's ramp, taking an inordinate amount of time. The new U-shaped trolley that Mr Choo designed has a collapsible rear end which allows it to be wheeled straight onto the vehicle ramp. With this new trolley, the loading and unloading process requires only one person and it takes a mere five minutes compared to the old trolley's 15. Because maintenance personnel do not have to physically carry the cylinders, their chances of injury are minimised.

The new trolley design also enhances safety inside the vehicle. Previously, the huge nitro-



Mr Choo's new trolley design improves work efficiency and safety



The old trolley only has one wheel at the back as opposed to two on the new one (picture courtesy of Mr Choo)

gen cylinders could not be fully secured inside the vehicle. Personnel seated in the back risked having their feet run over by the rolling heavy cylinders. The new trolley, with its cylinder load, is designed to be securely strapped inside the vehicle. Another safety feature of the new trolley is the use of two rear wheels for greater stability. The old trolley had only one wheel in the back which made it less stable for users.

Mr Choo can certainly take great satisfaction in knowing that his new U-shaped trolley has improved the work safety and efficiency of his men. He said, "It is also important that our personnel perform their work safely and efficiently. I believe this new trolley has achieved both."

HEY! THAT IS EASY!

That's the theme for this year's Army Innovation and Safety Day (AISD) 2010. Organised by HQ Maintenance and Engineering Support, it will be held at Pasir Laba Camp, Leader's Hall on 27 April (0900 – 2000 hrs) and 28 April (0900 – 1800 hrs). As the theme suggests and emphasises, innovation and safety initiatives are collective conscientious efforts by all our people. The event aims to challenge the common perception that innovation and safety projects are usually large and complex. Instead it promotes the notion that it is all about being spontaneous and committed to achieving one's goal.



At AISD 2010, visitors will experience first-hand the various innovation and safety exhibits. Participating external agencies for the safety segment include Automotive Association (AA), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF), Traffic Police and Singapore Safety Driving Centre (SSDC). Visitors will also enjoy many interactive and fun-filled activities. For example, at the five senses interactive rooms, you will be able to challenge your senses of sight, hear, smell, taste and touch. Guest speakers will share their insights on Innovation and Organisational Excellence (OE).

The event will also recognise various significant contributions under the COA Innovation, COA Safety and STAR Service awards.

See you there!

Passing On The Baton		
APPOINTMENT	INCOMING	OUTGOING
CDF	MG NEO KIAN HONG	LG DESMOND KUEK
COA	BG CHAN CHUN SING	MG NEO KIAN HONG
CO 23SA	MAJ KOH HAN SEAH	LTC LEK SENG KH'HOON
652 SIR RSM	SSG (NS) ANG HO SOON	CAH
692 SIR RSM	SSG (NS) TOH BOON TECK	-
626 SIR RSM	UNIT AOR ON 1 APR 10	MSG (NS) ONG ENG HUI
611 SIR RSM	MSG (NS) ONG ENG HUI	-

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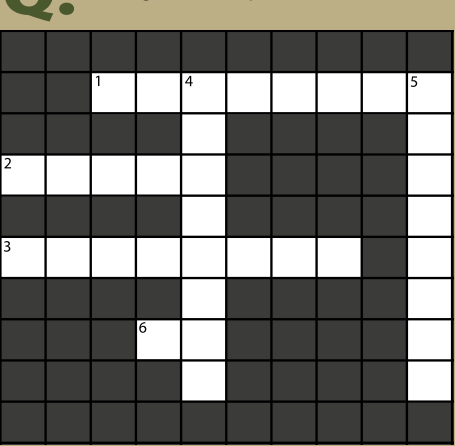
ARMY NEWS (Suggestions and Feedback)
303 Gombak Drive, #03-01
MINDEF Building, Singapore 669645
Tel: 6427 0460 Fax: 6427 0640



Quiz Of The Month - MARCH / Issue 174

Send us the correct answer and win a pair of Golden Village movie vouchers. There will be 5 winners!

Q: Closing Date: 23 April 2010



Across

1. MG Neo Kian Hong believes Our Army has evolved to be ready for a full _____ of operations.
 2. Total Defence Day was particularly significant for 1 GDS, who performed _____ duties.
 3. The RECORD V recommendations include _____ rank movements and increased combat allowance.
 6. DPM Teo said, "When taken together, the many 'I Will's become '_____ Will!'"
- ### Down
4. When cycling, adjust the seat height so that your legs are completely _____ at the bottom of the pedal strokes with your heels on the pedals.
 5. The ACE event was an excellent opportunity for those interested in a _____ career in the SAF.

Rank / Name:

Unit:

NRIC:

E-mail:

Contact No:

1. This contest is open to all Army personnel except the executive staff of Army News Section.
2. Each person is allowed one entry.
3. Prizes are not exchangeable for cash. Winners can either collect their prizes from Army News or arrange for mail delivery.
4. The judges' decision is final. Please send us your entries via mail or email us at armynews@starnet.gov.sg.
5. Prizes not collected within a month of notification will be forfeited.

JANUARY / Issue 172 Quiz Answers

- A: 1. Support
2. Pacific
3. Warriors

4. Commando
5. Internship
6. Afghanistan

JANUARY / Issue 172 Winners

- 1) 2SG (NS) ONG EIK SAW NRIC: S0000433B
2) 1TA BENJAMIN YONG NRIC: S0000086Z
3) 1SGTEO KOK MENG NRIC: S0000664F
4) PTE GUINASELAN NRIC: S0000680E
5) PTE NEUBRONNER KEITH TYRONE NRIC: S0000604F

Winners are to contact Army News at 6427 0642 for collection of prizes.

Info Nuggets

Fitness and Fun on the Runway!

Story by Marcus Ho / Photographs courtesy of Air Force News

Jointly organised by SAFRA and the RSAF to promote a healthy and active lifestyle, the National Runway Cycling and Skating (NRWCS) is a major annual public sporting event held at Paya Lebar Air Base. Each year, the NRWCS attracts more than 6,000 participants. This much-anticipated mass cycling and inline skating event provides a great opportunity for both competitive and leisure sports enthusiasts to enjoy the sport they love at a unique venue.

Whether you are looking for some competitive challenges to test your personal endurance level, or simply to have fun with your family on a Sunday morning, the NRWCS will offer an unforgettable experience for everyone!

This year, the 15th NRWCS will be held on 20 June. More information on it can be found on www.safra.sg.

If you are keen to participate in this year's NRWCS, start your preparation now. To assist you, Army News gathered some essential cycling tips from a competitive cyclist, MAJ Poon Chung Kiat, Second-in-Command at Basic Military Training Centre School 3.

Proper Bike Fit

- Check that the seat is levelled horizontally so that your body does not slide forward or backward due to gravity.
- Adjust the seat height so that your legs are completely extended at the bottom of the pedal strokes with your heels on the pedals. Biomechanically, this is considered a neutral position. A seat height that is too high or low causes strain on the lower back and knees.

Correct Body Position

- Keep your elbows bent so that it is easier to manoeuvre the bike.
- Never cycle with your head facing down especially when you are getting tired. You will not be able to see oncoming dangers in time. Don't compromise your safety!

Proper Gear

Depending on their cost and weight factor, bike frames are produced from aluminum, carbon, titanium or steel. An aluminum frame is low-cost and lightweight. But because it is not very strong, it can feel unforgiving on rough roads. Carbon and titanium frames are very light and strong, hence providing a smoother ride, but they are costly. Steel frames are relatively inexpensive, but much heavier than the other types. Your choice will depend on your budget and the weight/strength factor that you are comfortable with.

A good helmet should fit well and keep your head relatively cool. Look for one with plenty of vents and easy-to-adjust straps to ensure a snug and comfortable fit.

Cycling shorts have a chamois insert to provide a padding between you and your bike seat. Look for a jersey with pockets in the back to hold small personal items such as energy bars, keys, phone. In addition, choose a fabric that can wick moisture away from your skin.

If you have clipless pedals, you will require shoes with cleats for securing to the pedals. You can get either road bike or mountain bike shoes. Road bike shoes have a stiffer sole to provide more pedalling power but are more difficult to walk in. Conversely, mountain bike shoes are better for walking as its sole is not so stiff, but the rider will need to exert more power when pedalling.

Cycling gloves are not an absolute necessity but they help to provide a better grip on the handle bars especially if you have sweaty palms and they also minimise the impact on your hands and protect them if you fall.

Other Tips

When riding your bike, try to apply equal force throughout your pedal strokes for greater efficiency. You can understand this easily by visualising your pedal strokes as constant turning circles instead of applying power only on the downward pedal stroke.

While on the road, always assume you are not seen properly by other drivers. Make yourself as visible as possible by wearing appropriate attire. When riding at night, it is always a good practice to ensure that at least one light is turned on to warn others of your presence on the road. Always wear a helmet. Finally, obey traffic rules and slow down at all intersections.



The NRWCS offers fun and excitement for participants of all ages

