

# RESCUE 995

THE SINGAPORE CIVIL DEFENCE FORCE MAGAZINE

## SERIES 9

A large-scale industrial fire is the central focus of the cover. A massive, billowing plume of thick, black smoke rises vertically from a fire source, filling much of the upper half of the frame. The fire itself is visible at the base of the smoke, showing bright orange and red flames. The background shows an industrial or commercial area with buildings, a paved area, and some greenery under a clear sky.

# CONTENTS

## FEATURE STORY



16 Series 9: Exercise Northstar



20 The Dream Lives On

## TECH BITES

8 SCDF Social Media Outreach



## VOICES FROM THE HEARTS

11 Thumbs Up, **Angel!**



LTA Teo Sim Joo (ROTA Commander, Bukit Batok Fire Station)

## RESONDER'S DIARY

12 Firefighting Night Classes

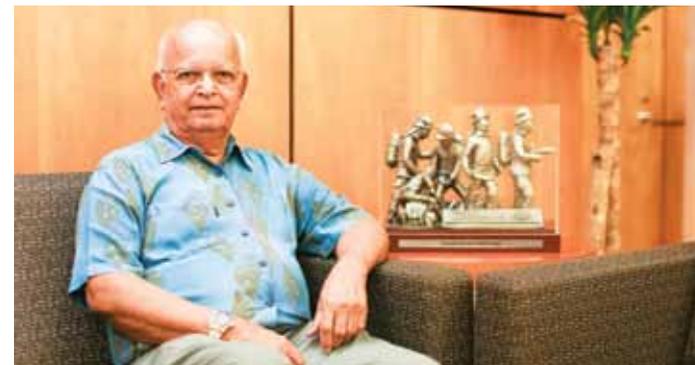
## GOOD OLD DAYS



24 The Vigilante Corps



28 An Exclusive Interview With Our Pioneer Mr Amerasinghe, Former Director Of Civil Defence



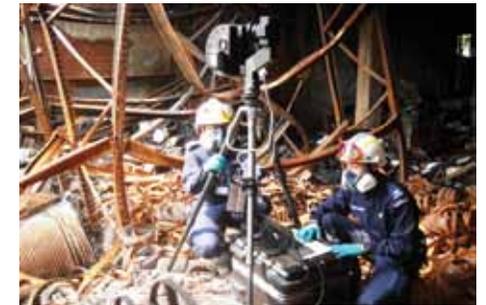
## LIMELIGHT



30 The World Is Their Oyster



32 Happy Birthday, Fire Detectives



## NS STORIES

34 SCDF Fashion Guru Lends A Hand In 'Make A Nila' Programme



## GET IN TOUCH

Phone : +65 6848 1519

Email : SCDF\_Rescue\_995@scdf.gov.sg

Rescue 995 is published by the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF). All parts of this publication may not be reproduced without the written consent of the publisher. Printed for the SCDF by Chung Printing Pte Ltd. While every effort is made to ensure that the information in this newsletter is accurate and up-to-date, the editorial committee is not responsible for errors made as a result of the information received.

**Editorial Advisor**  
COL A. Razak Raheem

**Editor**  
Ms Michelle Lim

**Photographers**  
SCDF Multimedia Team  
SCDF Divisions' Staff

## Credits and Contributions

Mr Selwyn Terrance Amerasinghe  
LTC Eric Chua  
LTC Lim Beng Hui  
MAJ Quek Wei Liang  
MAJ Samuel Koh  
MAJ Khairah Mansor  
CPT Chua Kok Sin  
WO Ismail Latiff  
WO Zulkifli Latiff  
LCP Muhammad Nurhisham Bin Mohd Sharif

# Editor's Note:



When I was child, I lived with my late grandma. During my growing up years, she taught me numerous precious life lessons and she would always say that she was speaking from experiences. My late grandma grew up during the Japanese Occupation and she had recounted to me some of her wartime stories. It was a time when food was scarce and everyday was uncertain. During one of the air raids, her entire family was killed as they had only enough time to shield her. She was thoroughly heartbroken when burying each of them herself. Then, hardly anyone knew what to expect for the future.

It has been close to 15 years since she passed on.

Like my late grandma, Mr Amerasinghe, one of the first few Directors of Civil Defence, had experienced World War II at its full brunt. At the tender age of 9, he was forced to work as a labourer in order to survive the war years. He shared that he will always remember the sirens and bomb explosions during the war.

He too lost his parents.

Things became better when the war ended but he had never once took Singapore's Independence for granted. In fact, he applied his war experience to building the foundation of Singapore Civil Defence. In the eyes of our pioneers like Mr Amerasinghe, Singapore has progressed rapidly within a span of 50 years since our Independence. Due to the hard times which they had been through, they treasure and value today's

peace, harmony and economic progress.

You may have read numerous theories that argue against the possibility of a hot war among countries happening in our era. Some scholars share the belief that the war against terror is actually a more pronounced threat in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century due to differences in ideologies. If you ask me, my two cents worth would be that the aftermaths of any conflicts are the loss of innocent lives, physical trauma and psychological scars.

As a citizen of Singapore, I am glad that our security forces are doing its part to always stay vigilant and be operationally ready. As I bring you stories of the SCDF, I am glad and proud to know that this principle has always been the mantra of The Life Saving Force. The Exercise Northstar Series 9 is one good example spearheaded by the SCDF. This multi-agency coordinated exercise not only helps validate the current contingency plans, it is also an opportunity for officers and staff from various Homefront agencies to come together as one to safeguard Singapore's safety and security.

Another example would be the establishment of the SCDF Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) 25 years ago. With little knowledge and equipment then, the pioneers pushed hard for the FIU to propel not just locally but also, internationally. Today, the SCDF FIU is well respected by Fire Services from around the world.

Well, the hard times of yesteryears are over but we must still continue to strive hard to preserve and maximise the fruits of labour by our pioneers.

LTC Eric Chua and MAJ Khaisarah Mansor have served as Honorary Aides-De-Camps to the President of the Republic Singapore for close to a decade. Apart from saving lives locally and globally during Operation Lionheart missions, they also take on the honorable role in ensuring that the foreign dignitaries and guests of our President are well taken care of. Whether if it is the rubble of broken structures and immense chaos caused by natural disasters or the iconic lush green fields of the Istana, LTC Chua and MAJ Khaisarah have seen them all.

Well, time passes quickly. We are already into the second half of 2015. Have you done anything special to commemorate Singapore's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday? If not, it's time for you to get in to the groove of the SG50 celebrations as time and tides wait for no man.

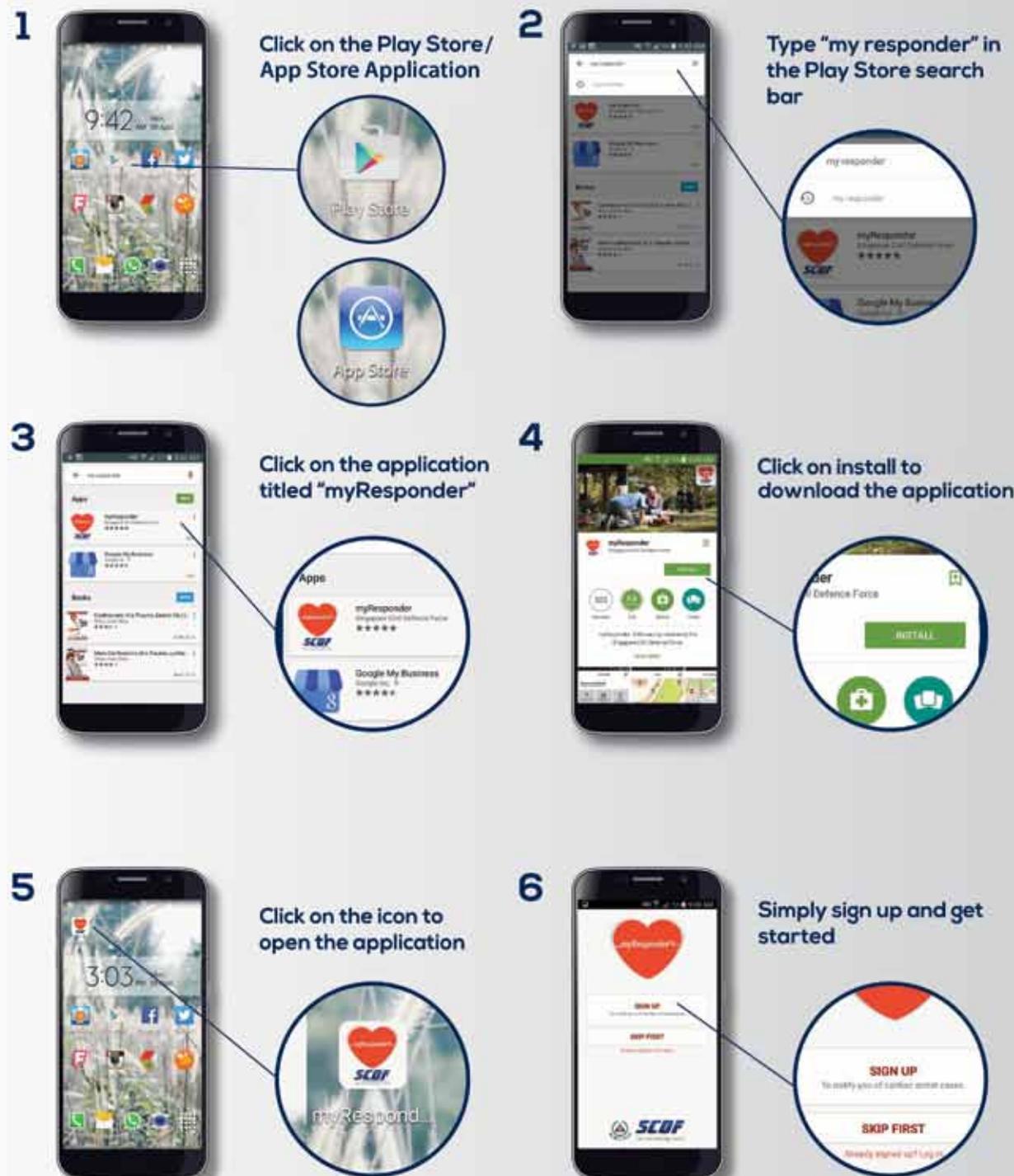
See you again in the next issue of Rescue 995.

**Michelle Lim**  
Editor, Rescue 995  
Public Affairs Department

# myResponder

is available in both Android & IOS Platforms

*If you are trained in CPR and AED, sign up at [www.raedi.sg](http://www.raedi.sg) and download the myResponder mobile application. Switch on your Location services and be ready to become a Community First Responder!*



# ONLINE CONTENTS

– [facebook.com/SCDFpage](https://facebook.com/SCDFpage)



facebook

**Singapore Civil Defence Force**  
38,847 likes

Singapore Civil Defence Force  
Jun 11 at 7:22pm

With [Team Singapore](#) breaking records for fun at [SEA GAMES 2015](#), we'd like to show you what we did for fun too!

We participated in the "Make-a-NILA" programme, where the local community took part in designing NILA plush toys. Our NILAs are being displayed at Kallang Wave Mall till 16 June.

GO TEAM SINGAPORE!

750 Likes, 3 Comments, 22 Shares

Singapore Civil Defence Force  
18 hrs Edited

"Proud of how Home Team officers contributed to the SEA Games, both in the competitions, and behind the scenes.

Our officers worked round the clock to ensure a safe, secure and friendly Games for participants, officials and spectators." - DPM Teo.

[#ThankYou#UnsungHeroes CD Lionhearter Club](#)

64 Likes, 1 Comment, 1 Share

# ONLINE CONTENTS

– [twitter.com/SCDF](https://twitter.com/SCDF)



Twitter

**SCDF**  
The Life Saving Force

4,537 TWEETS | 2,888 FOLLOWING | 11.5K FOLLOWERS | Follow

Tweets | Tweets & replies | Photos & videos

SCDF retweeted [Channel NewsAsia](#) @ChannelNewsAsia Jun 2  
Patients sent by @SCDF can now receive emergency medical care at Raffles Hospital [bit.ly/1Q9KsqS](http://bit.ly/1Q9KsqS)

18 RETWEETS | 11 FAVOURITES

Tweets | Tweets & replies | Photos & videos

SCDF retweeted May 8  
[Exercise]: SPF stormed the mall where gunmen went on a shooting spree. #ExNS9

22 RETWEETS | 12 FAVOURITES

Tweets | Tweets & replies | Photos & videos

SCDF retweeted May 8  
[Exercise]: Emergency responders evacuate casualties affected by a HazMat agent that's thrown into the crowd. #ExNS9

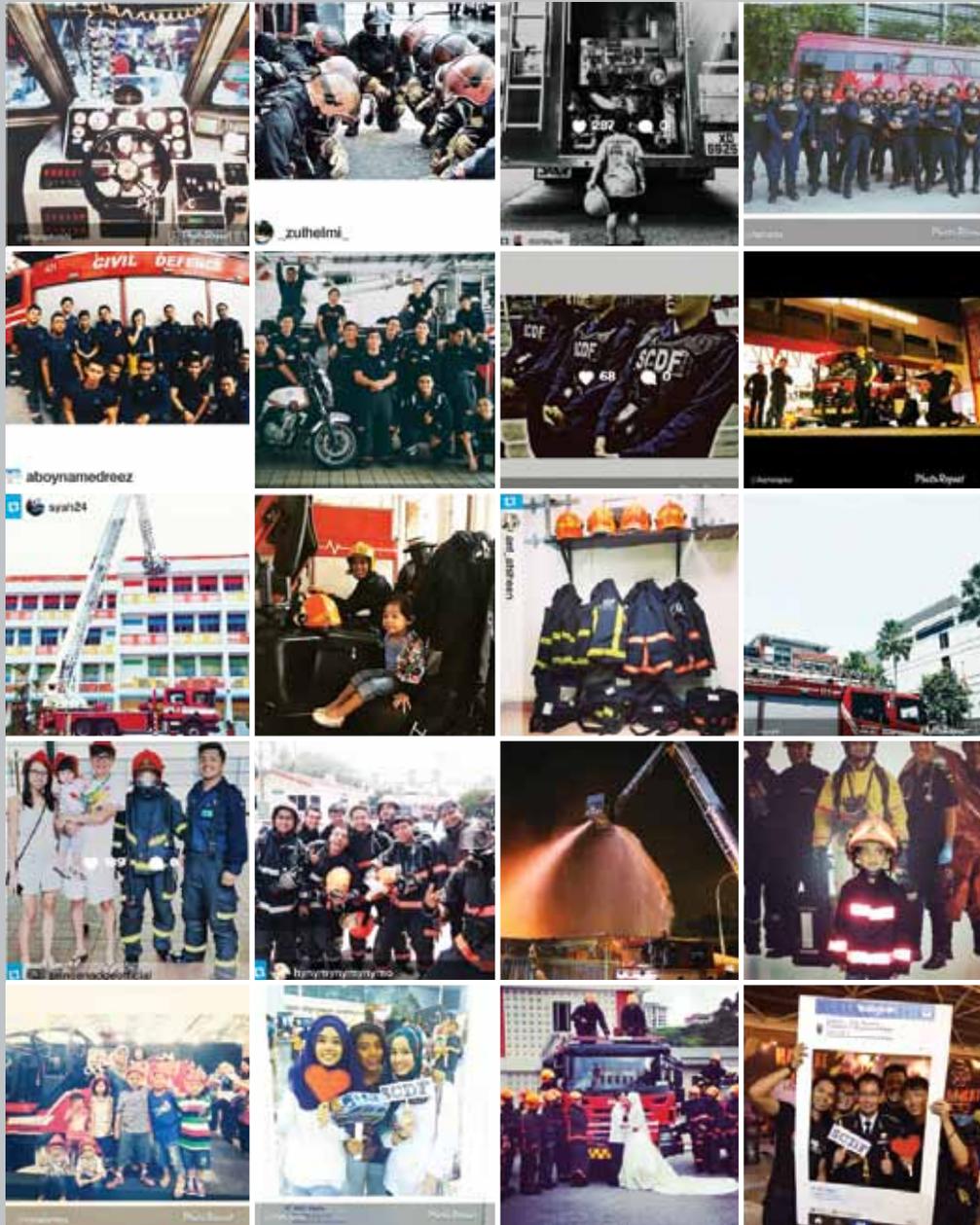
11 RETWEETS | 7 FAVOURITES

# ONLINE CONTENTS

– Instagram #ANATIONOFLIFESAVERS



Instagram



# SAVE-A-LIFE INITIATIVE



- Annually, more than 1800 Singaporeans suffer from cardiac arrest, of which only **3%** survive
- Every second matters as chances of survival drops by **7% to 10%** every minute without CPR intervention
- Bystander CPR is shown to increase survival rate by **2.2 times**

**So Let's Train to Save Lives Today!**



### Island-wide Installation of AEDs at Lift Lobbies

- Enhance Community Response in the residential heartlands
- 1 AED per 2 to 3 HDB blocks by 2018
- 6 Piloted Constituencies from August 2015
  - Bedok
  - Pasir Ris West
  - Bukit Panjang
  - Radin Mas
  - Choa Chu Kang
  - Tampines West



### Dispatcher-Assisted First Responder (DARE) Programme

- Learn and be familiar with essential CPR and AED skills in a 60-minute hands-on training session
- Come and sign up for the **DARE Programme** by contacting **6576 2643** or email **DARE\_programme@sgh.com.sg**



### myResponder Mobile App

- To improve survival rate of cardiac arrest victims via:
  - **EARLY ACCESS** with geo-location by 995
  - **EARLY CPR** by community first responders
  - **EARLY DEFIBRILLATION** with public AEDs

A Community Project By:



# VOICES FROM THE HEARTS

*Excerpt from letters and email compliments which the SCDF has received from members of public*

I was sent to the hospital twice by the SCDF ambulances within the same week. The first incident happened along Thomson Road and the second incident at home. On both occasions, the SCDF ambulance crew were very patient and they kept me calm and assured. I am particularly impressed with the team work displayed and how reliable they are.

It makes me feel fortunate to be a Singaporean especially when I know that I can always count on the Home Team.

*Ann Tan*

The team of paramedics and medic who attended to my mother were highly professional. Not only were they caring towards her, the journey to the hospital was also very swift. Keep up the good work!

*Tan Soon Hiang*

I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the paramedics SSG Mohamed Shafiee Bin Jamin, CPL Muhd Shah Rudin B. Hasan and LCP (NS) Aslam Ahmad B Nizamudeen from Paya Lebar Fire Station for attending to me when I was unwell.

SSG Shafiee was there to comfort me throughout the journey and what touched me most was his initiative to constantly assure me of my condition. He has also shown great leadership to his crew and to me, that is a hallmark of a great leader.

*Ho Jin Cheng*

During our visit to the Central Fire Station and Civil Defence Heritage Gallery, my husband and I were delighted to meet Mr Segar. He shared with us the rich history of SCDF and its evolution as we toured the premises. I could sense his pride and passion even though he has already retired and was sharing with us his firefighting experiences as a CDAU Volunteer. He has made the visit extremely worthwhile.

*Ronnie and Cheryl*

## Thumbs Up, Angel!



*LTA Teo Sim Joo, ROTA Commander, Bukit Batok Fire Station*

A wheelchair bound uncle was assisted by the bus driver when alighting from the bus. While he had activated the lever for the handicapped, he overlooked that the uncle might be stuck on a muddy grass patch upon descend. As a result, the uncle toppled over from his wheelchair and half his body was covered in mud.

Thankfully, a lady officer from the SCDF was also on board the same bus. She rushed out of the bus quickly to help the uncle and even picked up his belongings. She did not care if her shoes and skirt would be covered with mud or about her bag that she left in the bus. After ensuring that the uncle was fine, she took her bag and alighted from the bus and stayed on to accompany him.

I am stunned by her capability and quick reaction. I am also extremely touched and I applaud her sacrifices. Thumbs up! She should definitely be recognised for her good deeds and kindness.

*Nur Umairah*

My wife and I met with an accident when we were riding on my motorcycle. SGT Remy from Sengkang Fire Station was off-duty when he witnessed the aftermath of the accident but he stopped immediately to render his assistance to us. Not only did he provide us with First-Aid assistance, he was also very reassuring and calm when attending to us. We would like to convey our thanks to this gentleman for his kindness and professionalism.

*Lee Sow Choy*

13 of us including two children were trapped in a lift. All attempted rescue efforts were unsuccessful until the arrival of the SCDF personnel from Central Fire Station. They were swift in their operation and by no time, we were out from the faulty lift.

*Kea Jin Suan*



*Picture: 14 Volunteers joined the inaugural CDAU Firefighting Course. As three of them had withdrawn from the course mid-way, 11 Volunteers graduated as Full-Fledged Volunteer Firefighters on 30 June 2015*

# Firefighting Night Classes

MAJ Quek Wei Liang  
Commander Fire Station (Marina Bay)

The Civil Defence Auxiliary Unit (CDAU) was formed in April 2006 and comprises volunteers from all walks of life. They don the SCDF uniform and perform frontline and staff duties alongside our regular officers, full-time National Servicemen and Operationally-Ready National Servicemen. There are currently numerous vocations in the CDAU such as Public Education, Fire Safety Enforcement, Firefighting and Emergency Medical Services.

The Volunteer Firefighter scheme (for volunteers without prior firefighting experiences) is the latest vocation that had been introduced to the CDAU, in early 2015. In the past five years, the SCDF has received more than 300 applications from volunteers who are keen to join our firefighting fraternity. These are individuals who are driven by a desire to serve the community at large and not to mention a passion for the adrenalin pumping actions of being in the heart of firefighting and rescue operations to provide relief to those in distress. The

inaugural CDAU Firefighting Course consists of 11 CDAU volunteers who are tertiary students and working adults from both the private and public sectors including officers from the Singapore Armed Forces and Singapore Police Force.

Here is an interesting insight from a few of them on being a volunteer with The Life Saving Force.

CPL(V) Andrew Xiao had always been finding opportunities to 're-enter' the SCDF as a firefighter after he had to reluctantly cease his firefighting training course during his national service days due to a shoulder injury. CPL(V) Leow Jun Cong, a tertiary student who is also serving as a Cadet Lieutenant with the National Civil Defence Cadet Corp, always wanted to be part of the firefighting fraternity. Although the young man has yet to serve his full-time National Service, he snapped at the opportunity of joining the CDAU to fulfil his dream of becoming a firefighter.



Picture (Top): The CDAU Firefighter Course curriculum emphasizes on the basics of firefighting and rescue skills and knowledge. Apart from laying and rolling hoses, the CDAU Volunteer Firefighters also learned how to operate the hydrants and leverage on the use of water from fire engines.

**Join the CDAU Now!**

Find out more about the CDAU from <https://www.hometeamvolunteers.gov.sg/> or contact Mr Ian Ng at 6-848 3411.



Picture (Bottom): The CDAU Volunteer Firefighters were required to complete different sets of physical exercises with their firefighting gear on and under the hot afternoon sun. This is to allow them to acclimatise themselves to the inevitable heat of our tropical country.



Picture (Top): CPL(V) Farhan Ahmad Mumtaz receiving his graduation certificate from COL Abdul Razak, Director of Volunteer and Community Partnership Department

The only woman in this course, CPL(V) Mabel Ong shared the same aspiration as CPL(V) Leow. She too has always wanted to be a firefighter. Like her boyfriend SGT Hazmi Aris, a paramedic with the SCDF, they find helping others and saving lives an instant gratification that no words can describe. As Mabel continues to pursue her Masters in Speech and Language Pathology at the National University of Singapore, she will also be serving as a volunteer firefighter alongside the love of her life, SGT Hazmi at Central Fire Station.

Pakistan born CPL(V) Farhan Ahmad Mumtaz is the only Singapore permanent resident of this course and he shared that he had been inspired by the meaningful work of firefighters for a long time. CPL(V) Farhan personally witnessed the efforts that firefighters put in to help those in distress when he met with a road accident a long time ago. Now that he is equipped with the relevant knowledge and skills, CPL(V) Farhan is all ready and empowered to make a positive difference to the lives of others.

While the course curriculum was designed with the full-time jobs and commitments of the volunteers in mind, the depth and breadth of each training session was never once compromised. It was thrice weekly training sessions, twice on weekday evenings and a Saturday morning, for 15 consecutive weeks. Apart from the need to carry heavy firefighting equipment and having to don the firefighting gear and Chemical Agent suit to allow the volunteers to be acclimatised to the heat, they were also trained to put out different types of raging fire that ranges from residential unit fire, LPG fire and even oil refinery fire. In addition, they also had to be competent in using rescue equipment such as utilising hydraulic spreaders and cutters to ply open vehicles to extricate trapped casualties in the aftermath of road accident scenarios.

These 11 dedicated CDAU volunteers graduated from the 15 week firefighting course on 30 June 2015 and made history as Singapore's first batch of volunteer firefighters. They will be putting their training to good use when deployed alongside the SCDF frontline crew in responding to real incidents. As a ready pool of firefighters in the community, these volunteers also play an important role as highly trained Community First Responders to render swift assistance to those in distress prior to the arrival of the SCDF Emergency Response Specialists.

As COL Abdul Razak Raheem, Director of Volunteer and Community Partnership Department said during the graduation ceremony of Singapore's first CDAU Volunteer Firefighting Course, "Being equipped in the triangle of life, you will never know when these skills will come in handy to make a vital difference to someone's life and that someone could be your loved ones, friend, neighbour, or even a total stranger who is a fellow human being in desperate need of your help." 🚒

# SERIES 9: NORTHSTAR



Picture: 80 students from the Institute of Technical Education (East) who are currently pursuing Nitec in Beauty and Wellness course and Higher Nitec in Beauty and Spa Management also played their part to simulate injuries on 'casualties' to make the exercise a near realistic experience for the participants

## FEATURE STORY

It was a Tuesday morning in New York City that changed history. Nobody except the perpetrators were aware that one of the most iconic buildings in the world was going to collapse into a pile of debris and be reduced to ashes.

At approximately 8:45am on 11 September 2001 when everyone was suited up to look professional and ready for yet another day of work, an American Airlines Boeing 767 loaded with 20,000 gallons of jet fuel pierced through the north tower of the World Trade Centre in New York City. The grandeur of the 110-storey skyscraper diminished literally as its physical structure weakened and came crashing onto the ground, resulting in a mushroom cloud. Moments later, the south tower of the World Trade Centre faced the same fate. This blatant acts of terrorism known as the 9/11 incident saw the demise of 2977 people, including firefighters from the New York City Fire Department and mass casualties.

While the fight against terrorism was not new to the world then, it became a dominant concern specifically after the 9/11. Recognising the "terror" of such acts, Singapore has always been in the forefront of the global war on terrorism. While international and regional counterterrorism cooperation is paramount, continual vigilance and steadfastness within our national frontier is of equal importance.

As the city state's national emergency response authority, the SCDF does not only mitigates the daily fire and rescue incidents that occur within Singapore but as the Incident Manager of Civil Emergencies in Singapore, it also spearheads mega exercises involving Homefront agencies' response plans and put to test the readiness and coordination among these agencies in responding to major man-made disasters. Over the recent years, the series of exercises have also served to enhance public awareness on the threat of terrorism and encourage continued public vigilance.

The latest Exercise Northstar Series 9 was organised by the SCDF at the Singapore Sports Hub and Kallang Wave Mall on 9 May 2015. Witnessed by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and several Cabinet Ministers, this year's exercise saw the involvement of about 600 staffs from 16 Homefront key



Picture: A Hazmat trained SCDF personnel (left) sharing with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (middle) and Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean (right) on the roles of the SCDF HazMat Emergency Assessment and Response Team in Exercise Northstar Series 9

agencies such as the Singapore Police Force (SPF), Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Ministry of Health (MOH) and Land Transport Authority.



Picture: Youngest 4 years old volunteer Nur Puteri Bte Khir Ramley Janaton (middle) shared with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (right) that she dialled 995 on her (toy) phone immediately after she heard the explosions

Building on SCDF's strong partnerships with the community, it was also the first time that 1,300 volunteers from the various SCDF Volunteer Schemes, PA Youth Movement and students had participated in an Exercise Northstar. Among them were our youngest 4 years old volunteer Nur Puteri Bte Khir Ramley Janaton and the oldest volunteers couple Mr Francis Ng and Mrs Catherine Loh at 75 years old.



Picture: Oldest volunteers couple Mr Francis Ng (left) and Mrs Catherine Loh (middle) shared with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (right) that it was their first time participating in Exercise Northstar

80 other ITE College East students who are currently pursuing Nitec in Beauty and Wellness course and Higer Nitec in Beauty and Spa Management contributed their expertise by simulating injuries "make-over" on the casualty role players to make the exercise a truly realistic experience for the exercise participants. These students had done substantial research on the nature and extent of the injuries which victims of terror attacks typically suffer from (see page 16).

Exercise Northstar Series 9 was based on a multiple terror attacks scenarios during an event held at the Singapore Sports Hub. The following is a blow by blow account of three of its major scenarios:

# SERIES 9: NORTHSTAR

## Scenario 1

Vehicles Exploded at Vehicle-Screening Station, sending huge fireballs into the air



*Picture: Vehicles Exploded at the Vehicle-Screening Station sending huge fireballs into the air*

At noon of 9 May 2015, the stadium and the Sports Hub were crowded to the brim in view of a major sporting event that was about to commence. As a security measure, Vehicle Check Stations (VCS) manned by police and auxiliary officers have been set up at the National Stadium.

The special guests and spectators of the event were streaming in when they were startled by a sudden loud explosion. Some of the commuters and spectators who were walking past the link bridge to the stadium nearby felt the ground shook momentarily. Within less than what seemed like a split second, a fire ball and huge mushroom cloud of acrid smoke and dust ascended into the sky.

A Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device has detonated at one of the VCS located at Carpark S of the National Stadium. Several officers at the VCS were killed instantaneously while others suffered various degrees of blast injury. Seconds later, another nearby vehicle at the same carpark exploded, sending another huge fireball into the air and adding to the fatalities and casualty counts.

While the rest were still shaken by the double blasts, an experience so foreign and intrusive to Singapore, the SPF officers who arrived at the scene immediately evacuated the walking casualties and at the same time, scanned for secondary explosive devices. Once the site was rendered safe, the SCDF Emergency Response Specialists sprang into action and conducted simultaneous firefighting and rescue operations. Two firebikers armed with the Compressed Air Foam (or CAF) backpacks contained the vehicle fire while the arriving SCDF crew from the Red Rhino and fire engines were busy setting up more CAF jets. Concurrently, the Unmanned Fire-fighting Machine manoeuvred right at the tip of a fiery car and gave a swift "knock-out" to the raging inferno. Together with the medical teams from SAF and MOH, the SCDF paramedics began to stabilise and treat the burnt casualties and blast victims at the on-site first aid points before conveying them to hospitals.

In the midst of the mayhem triggered by the vehicles' explosions, the perpetrator had taken advantage of the chaotic situation and made his way into the stadium via the East Tunnel. He was armed with an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) laced with chemical agent!

## Scenario 2

Chemical Agent release and unexploded IED/s scenario within the Stadium



*Picture: The HazMat Emergency Assessment and Response Team was swiftly deployed to verify and mitigate the source of chemical agent that had been released by the perpetrator in the stadium*

Just as the spectators in the stadium were evacuating, the same perpetrator dashed in and threw a bottle of IED containing an unknown chemical agent liquid into the crowd. While the SPF officers apprehended and pinned him down to the ground, several evacuees who were near where the bottle was thrown began to suffer nausea and were coughing and vomiting. Some even started foaming at the mouth. As the mass casualties displayed symptoms of chemical agents exposure, the SCDF Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Control Vehicle was deployed together with the HazMat Emergency Assessment and Response Team.

In the midst of SCDF's HazMat team verifying and mitigating the source of the chemical agent, another IED placed at the Northern Sector seating gallery of the stadium was found. The SAF Explosive Ordnance Disposal team was activated to the scene to neutralise the bomb by means of a Remote Operated Vehicle.

At this point in time, a large number of casualties have already been safely evacuated from the stadium and directed to the first aid point for medical triaging and treatment. Those who were exposed to the chemical agent must first be decontaminated before being conveyed to the hospital.

## Scenario 3

Gunmen attack at the Kallang Wave Mall



*Picture: SCDF responders from its Special Rescue Unit attending to the casualties and rushing them to the on-site first aid posts for immediate medical attention*

As the evacuees from the stadium were entering the Kallang Wave Mall in different waves, a group of four gunmen who disguised themselves as shoppers suddenly flashed their weapons and without warning, began their cold-blooded shooting spree at the shoppers and evacuees. Who would have thought that the evacuees from the stadium would have fallen prey to the callous gunmen at the neighbourhood mall? The SPF officers from its Anti-Swarming Team surrounded the gunmen and returned fire, "killing" a few of them. The traumatic situation was over within a minute and SCDF responders from its Special Rescue Unit attended to the casualties and rushed them to the site first aid posts for immediate medical attention.

At the end of the exercise, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong gave a media soundbite in which he commented on the benefits of the exercise to the volunteers:

"They are crowd simulators, they are pretending to be casualties, but they are learning something as well, and I think many of these volunteers actually will be participating in the SEA Games either as competitors or in the opening ceremony, and so I think we are inoculating ourselves just in case anything happens," said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. 🚒



*Picture: SPF Anti-Swarming Team neutralising the gunman*

# THE DREAM LIVES ON

  
COL Abdul Razak  
Director  
Public Affairs Department

Ms Michelle Lim  
Senior Staff Officer (Publications)  
Public Affairs Department

**62** years has passed since Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay reached the 29,035 foot summit of Mount Everest on 29 May 1953. They scaled a mountain much revered that no man believed was achievable. Despite the arduous months of training as well as physical hardship and mental resilience which they encountered during the actual climb, it was however only humanly possible for them to remain on the summit of Mount Everest for 15 minutes before they descended back to the base camp. Sir Hillary and Norgay have since unlocked an achievement that was once deemed impossible. Since then, generations of mountaineers have scaled Mount Everest and hundreds have reached its summit.

Other than fitness, climbers are required to acclimatise their bodies to the high altitude and relatively thinner air of the earth's highest mountain. For three times a week, the two SCDF siblings WO Ismail Latiff, Deputy Platoon Commander of the elite SCDF Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART) and WO Zulkifli Latiff, Deputy ROTA Commander of Tampines Fire Station trained themselves fit for their dream to summit Mount Everest. Lugged with a 15kg load, they climbed a 40-storey building in Toa Payoh estate with five repetitions so as to build on the muscular strengths of their lower limbs. They consistently completed a 10 km run and each run was timed below an hour. In addition, they also trained in a specialised gym that is purpose-built to simulate a chamber with lower levels of oxygen intake.

As WO Ismail puts it – “Just like firefighting and rescue operations, nothing beats gaining real experiences as opposed to the controlled environment. Unless an individual has been put to test through real operations, one will never ever be able to experience the full brunt of reality”. Before their very first training expedition to Mount Kinabalu, Malaysia, some of the climbers from the initial team of 20 who made up the Aluminaid Team Singapore Everest 2015 had already dropped out due to personal reasons like family commitment. More team members left subsequently when they embarked on their Technical Mountaineering course in India, Shiti Dhar Peak.

At one look, it is obvious that WO Ismail is the younger brother. As compared to the slightly stern and firm persona of WO Zulkifi, WO Ismail is cheeky, playful and bubbly. Despite the differences, both brothers are passionate about saving lives. When asked why they wanted to pursue their dream to reach the peak of Mount Everest, they said that it is for their love of God's creation. Nature is very beautiful, indeed.

While the SCDF siblings were amongst the final three who stayed on, they admitted to their weaknesses too. Elder brother WO Zulkifli, the expedition leader, felt weak and lethargic during his first training experience at Mount Kinabalu. From the books that he had read about climbing at high altitudes, the expedition leader knew that he had climbed too quickly and his body was failing him in the process of acclimatisation. Nonetheless, he made practical alterations and successfully led the team to the peak of the Sabah mountain.

WO Zulkifi said: “There had been numerous instances in which my firefighting experiences was put to good use. In every climb, I play the role of recovery which is meant to instil a sense of hope to those who have fallen victims to unfortunate events. Under any circumstances, giving up has never been an option for me. Such mental resilience pushes me to complete each climb despite the pounding headaches which I occasionally experienced. It is just like firefighting, no matter how hot the environment is, a firefighter just needs to focus on the goal of putting out the flames. In each ascent, my focus is to lead the team to the summit”.





*Picture : Members of the Aluminaid Team Singapura Everest 2015 were heli-evacuated from the mountains as the assess routes were all destroyed by the earthquake*



*Picture (Left to Right): WO Zulkifli Bin Latiff, Ms Nur Yusrina Bte Yaakob, WO Ismail Bin Latiff and Mr Seumas Yeo from the Aluminaid Team*

After all the countless training sessions and physically and mentally demanding climbing expeditions, the brothers finally set out for Mount Everest in Nepal with one other team mate, Ms Nur Yusrina, on 25 March 2015. When recounting his experience, WO Ismail described Nepal for its breath-taking sites and tranquillity. He also marvelled at the locals for leading their lives simply. It reminded him of what humanity should be like – natural and unpretentious. Soon, the cheekiness in his eyes disappeared as he lowered his gaze. His elder brother turned to look at him and perceived a deep sense of nostalgia and unfulfilled dream.

WO Ismail uttered, “I was confident that we would return back to land on 7 June 2015 after we have reached the peak of Mount Everest. When I was on my way up to the peak, I found myself admiring the massive mountains. The place gave such a quiescent and serene atmosphere. The grandeur of the world’s most beautiful skyscrapers can never match up to the beauty of nature. The mountains of Everest were covered with snow at the summit and while it was really cold up there, the sound of the swirling winds soothed my soul.”

As the team of three were resting at one of the base camps, the wind became stronger and frigid as the weather turned for the worst. They were told by their Sherpa that it was rather common to experience avalanches at the mountain top. WO Zulkifli who is also a father of three had done in-depth research on the terrain and he is aware that the worst earthquake happened in Nepal about 80 years ago. Little did he know that on 23 April 2015, he would bear witness to the destructive force of an earthquake, which triggered a deadly avalanche on Mount Everest!

He was cooking in one of the tents when the great avalanche occurred. He rushed out of the tent to assess the situation and was shocked that he could hardly see beyond 100 metres ahead. The wind grew unforgivingly. It was as if nature had been angered. Immediately, he battled against the sound of the roaring winds and shouted to his team, “Get into the tents! Find cover, everybody! GET IN! GET IN! GET IN!” Once they had sprinted into the tent, WO Zulkifli rushed to switch of the stove while his younger brother switched off the heater. The SCDF siblings were worried that the tent would catch fire if these appliances were not switched off at the onslaught of the avalanche.

Soon after, they heard from one of the Sherpa that a climber was killed by the impact of the avalanche. Both WO Ismail and WO Zulkifli wanted to head down to help retrieve the body but they were advised against it as the assess routes had already been destroyed by the calamity. Before they could fully digest the bad news, another Sherpa appeared to inform that his brother-in-law, a fellow Sherpa, had also passed on.

Who would have known that the expedition was going to be so taxing - not just physically but emotionally?

Soon, many Sherpa were seen worried and restless in not knowing if their family members were alive. Each time the SCDF brothers met a Sherpa, they would lend their satellite phone to him to contact his family members. Many Sherpa tried making satellite phone calls to their homes but to no avail.

WO Zulkifli and WO Ismail stayed on for a few days before they were being heli-evacuated. When they finally reached Kathmandu, the Capital city of Nepal, it was a few days after since the occurrence of the massive 7.3 Richter Scale earthquake that took away close to 9000 lives and resulted in about 22,000 casualties. WO Ismail noticed that lives went on for the locals and he was thoroughly impressed by their resilience. While he saw many collapsed and damaged buildings, the locals seemed to have recovered from the earthquake and they were already out and about with their daily businesses.

WO Zulkifli even spotted a few kids who were on their way to school and was instantaneously reminded of his three children who were waiting for him at home in Singapore. As WO Zulkifli continued walking through the streets of shattered houses, he was once again reminded of how he used to share his passion of saving lives with his two sons and daughter. Suddenly, he missed their laughter dearly. Fortunately, through the satellite phone, the brothers managed to update their family members of their whereabouts to assuage the family’s anxiety.

As for WO Ismail, the moment he knew that the SCDF DART rescuers had been deployed for the Operation Lionheart humanitarian relief mission to Nepal in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, his mind was with his fellow rescuers. He wanted so much to be part of the Operation Lionheart team. He was constantly reminded of how little he or his brother could do on that fateful day for the 19 mountaineers who had succumbed to their death and 250 missing fellow climbers. It was a bleak day that was widely regarded as the deadliest day in the history of Mount Everest.

Unfortunately for the brothers by then, the Operation Lionheart Contingent had already set off for Pokhara, a considerable distance away from Kathmandu.

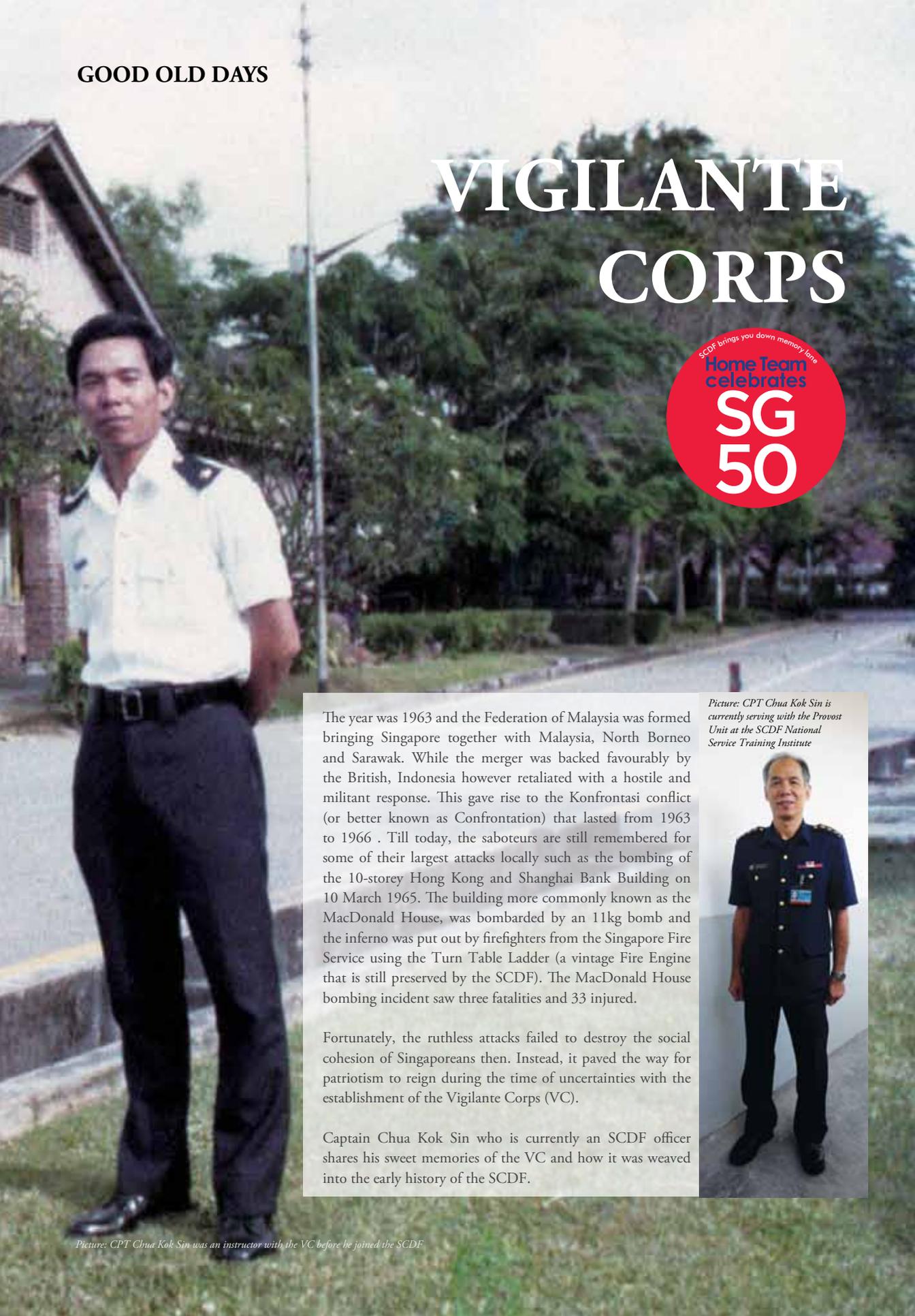
Both brothers nonetheless donated their medical supply and preserved food as soon as they had the opportunity to do so. That was the very least they could do to assist the Nepalese. They were informed by the Sherpa that their donations were eventually distributed to the inhabitants of a remote village.

It did not take many days before they finally bid farewell to Nepal and into the embrace of their family members and friends as they walked into the arrival gates of Changi Airport. While the warm Singapore weather greeted WO Zulkifli and WO Ismail, the frigid and snow-capped summit of Mount Everest will always be etched in the minds of the siblings.

They still aspire to be back in Nepal one day to continue the quest made by Sir Edmund Hillary in reaching the summit of Mount Everest.

And the dream lives on...

# VIGILANTE CORPS



The year was 1963 and the Federation of Malaysia was formed bringing Singapore together with Malaysia, North Borneo and Sarawak. While the merger was backed favourably by the British, Indonesia however retaliated with a hostile and militant response. This gave rise to the Konfrontasi conflict (or better known as Confrontation) that lasted from 1963 to 1966. Till today, the saboteurs are still remembered for some of their largest attacks locally such as the bombing of the 10-storey Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank Building on 10 March 1965. The building more commonly known as the MacDonald House, was bombarded by an 11kg bomb and the inferno was put out by firefighters from the Singapore Fire Service using the Turn Table Ladder (a vintage Fire Engine that is still preserved by the SCDF). The MacDonald House bombing incident saw three fatalities and 33 injured.

Fortunately, the ruthless attacks failed to destroy the social cohesion of Singaporeans then. Instead, it paved the way for patriotism to reign during the time of uncertainties with the establishment of the Vigilante Corps (VC).

Captain Chua Kok Sin who is currently an SCDF officer shares his sweet memories of the VC and how it was weaved into the early history of the SCDF.

*Picture: CPT Chua Kok Sin is currently serving with the Provost Unit at the SCDF National Service Training Institute*



*Picture: CPT Chua Kok Sin was an instructor with the VC before he joined the SCDF*

## Tell us more about the VC.

In 1963, the VC was established for the purpose of mobilising manpower to counter the Konfrontasi and its campaign of bomb attacks in Singapore. Within two months of its establishment, more than 10,000 men between the ages of 21 and 29 years old came forward voluntarily to defend the safety and security of the Federation. What made it so special was that every voluntary enrolment was spurred on by a sense of patriotism for the nation.

Even with Singapore's eventual separation from the Federation of Malaya on 9 August 1965, the attacks did not stop and members of the VC were equally persistent and resilient in countering these attacks. It was not until later when our founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew began to establish diplomatic relations with former President Suharto of Indonesia who took over power in 1967 from President Sukarno that the tensed local situation became better.

National Service (NS) was introduced during the post-independence days of Singapore in 1967. In that same year, the VC part-time service was considered as a form of the national conscription option. Unlike those who had opted to serve and complete their Full-Time NS within a two year period, part-time NSmen served the VC for a maximum duration of 12 years in which they were required to report for duty at night. Depending on the years in which they had served VC, the required number of duties ranged from twice weekly to once a month.

## Why was there a need for a part-time NS scheme?

When the NS policy was first introduced, not everyone was able to serve due to their family and work commitments. So the VC part-time scheme was aimed at this group of people to help them juggle their commitments and NS obligations. We must remember that the situation was very different then and this was specifically because we were still in the post-independence days.

Singapore had a humble beginning.

At that moment, I worked as an instructor with the VC and

had the opportunity to meet some of the NSmen who served the VC on a part-time basis. They consist of people from all walks of life, from the rich tow-kays (business entrepreneurs), lawyers, hawkers, lowly-educated workers to even gangsters from the secret societies. Each of them had personal reasons for enrolling into the VC part-time scheme.

## Did you say gangsters from the secret societies?

Yes, that's right. During the early days, we had gangsters from secret societies living amongst us. I can still remember an encounter that I had with a gangster in the VC.

During one of the night lectures which I conducted for the VC part-time NSmen, a gangster among them behaved very unruly and deliberately spoke loudly to interrupt my lecture. A few weeks later, he became a completely different person by keeping very quiet in class and did not even establish any eye contact with me. I was curious with his sudden change of behaviour.

Then one day, I came to realise that a big time gangster who had also attended the same night lecture was offended by the unruly gangster in my class. The former confronted the latter in the washroom to warn him to stop behaving rudely in class and to respect me!

## Why did you join the VC as an instructor?

As I have said, things were very different during the nation's post-independence days. As Singapore was still in its nascent years of economic development, there was little room for us to be as aspirational as the current generation. We hardly had the luxury of a job market to choose from and would simply grab any available job that came our way.

After completing my NS with the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), I applied for a government job. During my interview session with the Chairman of the Public Service, he asked if I was interested in a deskbound job dealing with statistics. I declined and I told him that my interest had always been with the uniformed service. That was how I ended up as an instructor with the VC. It was as simple as that.

I was issued a white shirt and a pair of blue pants on my first day at work. That was the uniform of the VC. For a start, I had to undergo a training program comprising of theory and practical sessions. The practical sessions included civil defence related topics like firefighting and rescue work and were held at a camp located within the Kent Ridge Park while the classroom-based lectures were conducted at the former SCDF Headquarters at Bendeemer camp. Once I graduated from the course, I was appointed as an instructor to imbue the same knowledge and skills to the trainees serving their NS.

**Share with us more about the Civil Defence Command?**

Before the formal establishment of the SCDF, the Civil Defence Command was once under the jurisdiction of the Singapore Police Force (SPF). Through the Civil Defence Command, courses on firefighting, rescue work and first aid were conducted for the Full-Time NSmen and Operationally Ready NSmen (ORNSmen) from both the SAF and SPF.

The disbandment of the VC took place about two months before the passing of the Civil Defence Act in 1986. During those two months, we continued to go to work although we did not know where the VC was heading towards due to the lack of information on its future deployment plan.

It was not until 1986 when the Civil Defence Act was passed in Parliament that the SCDF became an independent organisation. Some of the staff including myself and ORNSmen from the VC were transferred over to the SCDF.

**What is one thing that you will always remember about the VC?**

It would be the strong sense of Patriotism and Loyalty to safeguard the safety and security of Singapore. 🚒



# An Exclusive Interview with Our Pioneer Mr Amerasinghe, Former Director of Civil Defence



Mr Selwyn Terrance Amerasinghe who is 83 years of age attended the HT SG50 Exhibition held at the Home Team Academy on 28 May this year as a Pioneer Officer from the Singapore Police Force. During the event, he shared with a few members of the SCDF Senior Management on his days as Director of Civil Defence during the late 1970s.

This exclusive interview is the first time in which Mr Amerasinghe has shared his personal experiences during the Japanese Occupation of Singapore and his contributions towards the National Civil Defence Plan of 1982, the Plan which gave birth to the modern Civil Defence movement in Singapore.

Picture: Mr Selwyn Terrance Amerasinghe, Former Director Civil Defence

**You grew up during the Japanese Occupation. Share with us your experiences.**

Before the war, my father worked with an architect and earned a pretty decent income. It was not until the Japanese Occupation that everything took a dive.

As a result of the war, I lost both my parents. My father was sent overseas by the Japanese Imperial Army to do architectural work. For the first six months, my mother received some remittances from him. After that, she was informed by the Japanese Imperial Army that my father had stopped working for them and she would no longer receive any money. Over time, my dear mother passed on because of diabetes. I was only about 10 years old then.

In order to survive, my siblings and I became child labourers. As we earned very little income, we could not even afford to rent a room and had to live under makeshift sheds along the railway tracks.

**If there is one thing that you will always remember of the Japanese Occupation, what would it be?**

I will always remember the bombings and the residual shrapnel shells. For countless of times, I heard them coming but was just unsure where they would hit and explode. All I could do was to run and "take cover", including jumping into drains as a means of protection against the explosion.

**Did things become better after the Japanese Occupation?**

After the Japanese Occupation, Singapore once again became part of the British colony. Things began to change for the better. Several institutions were built from scratch and this included the Civil Defence Force.

By the time Singapore gained independence, I was already a young adult working for the Singapore Police Force.

**As a police officer, how did you end up as the Director of Civil Defence?**

That is a long story.

I became aware of the Singapore Civil Defence organisation in 1951 while undergoing training as a Cadet Probationary Inspector. This was because the Cadet Probationary Inspectors training syllabus then included a few weeks of Civil Defence training at the then Civil Defence Headquarters at Jalan Kolam Ayer. The training was administered by Colonel LT Firbank of the British Military Administration and included CPR and First Aid, the use of ladders and ropes as a means of ascending and descending from heights and rescuing 'casualties' buried under debris.

I recalled that part of the training required the police cadets like me to don breathing apparatus sets and crawl inside mock tunnels to rescue 'victims'. This was an ordeal as the breathing apparatus sets then were not as sophisticated as the one used by SCDF currently. The breathing apparatus set was nothing more than a gas mask attached to a long hose of about two inches in diameter! Those were my early encounters with the

Civil Defence organisation.

Then in 1976, I was appointed Commander of the Police National Service Command, and concurrently, the Director of Civil Defence. At that time, the Civil Defence organisation comprised predominantly members of the Vigilante Corps.

**The Civil Defence Plan was produced during your stint as Director of Civil Defence. Can you give us some insights into this?**

One day, months after my appointment as Director Civil Defence, I chanced upon a booklet in my office which turned out to be a draft of the National Civil Defence Plan that was authored by Colonel LT Firbank, the Director Civil Defence Head from 1951 to 1958.

In going through this document, I realised that while it was comprehensive, however, it was also in dire need of revision as the situation in Singapore had drastically changed over the years.

As I was planning to update the Civil Defence Plan, the different scenarios in which the Civil Defence Command would be expected to respond to kept racing through my mind. I realised that dealing with one scenario at a time would be an inappropriate piece-meal approach. I decided that the right approach was to plan for the worse-case scenarios during wartime.

Drawing on my own World War II experiences as well as similar experiences from the other Vigilante Corps and Civil Defence officers, the Civil Defence Plan was ultimately revised. Some of my contributions included encouraging the civilian populations to use sandbags as an effective shield against shrapnel and to utilise the drains as improvised covers in seeking protection against aerial bombardment.

I must stress that the revised National Civil Defence Plan was a result of teamwork rather than my efforts alone.

**How have things changed?**

As Director of Civil Defence then, I remember making a request for the installation of a few fans in our office to help our officers cool down after each operation. This was deemed a luxurious request then and after numerous questions posed to me by my superiors, my request was turned down.

Back then, we were not at all well-equipped. For example, we did not have any aerial appliances to allow our personnel to conduct height rescue operations effectively.

Today, things have definitely changed for the better. I mean just look at the modern and purpose-built SCDF establishments these days such as the SCDF Headquarters that I am at right now for this interview! It is surely a far cry from the small, non-conductive offices that once formed the Civil Defence Headquarters at Bendeemer Road. 🚒

# The World is their Oyster



Picture (Above): MAJ Khaisarah Mansor dressed in the SCDF No. 5J uniform. This uniform is worn during most ADC duties.



Picture (Above) MAJ Khaisarah Mansor at Operation Lionheart Mission to Christchurch, New Zealand

LTC Eric Chua was serving as a Media Relations officer and MAJ Khaisarah Mansor as a Personnel Officer when they were first appointed to be the Honorary Aides-de-Camps (HADCs) to the President of the Republic of Singapore. As they were among the SCDF pioneer batches of the HADCs, they knew very little then about the planning and executing of Presidential and State functions or the roles of liaison officers to VIPs and Masters of Ceremonies at official state events.

It has been close to a decade since they were first appointed as HADCs but both LTC Eric Chua and MAJ Khaisarah could vividly recall their interview sessions for the appointment. LTC Eric Chua said that he had butterflies in his stomach while waiting for his turn during the day of the interview. Held at the Istana, both LTC Chua and MAJ Khaisarah described the interview session as exciting but intimidating.

This is no surprise as these SCDF officers are definitely more acquainted with soot, stains and smoke from frontline operations than with the formalities of the Istana ground or its iconic lush fields.

LTC Eric Chua was deployed for SCDF Operation Lionheart mission to Khao Lak, Thailand in 2005, where he worked alongside the SCDF's elite Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (DART) to recover the bodies of the Tsunami victims. When recalling his days spent in Khao Lak, LTC Eric Chua could still sense the smell of rotting bodies and the sight of mass destruction. Other than coming face to face with mass fatalities and casualties, the saddest part of his humanitarian relief mission in Thailand was the sight of shattered soft toys that once belonged to the missing children.

Like LTC Eric Chua, MAJ Khaisarah also had first-hand experiences in overseas disasters. She was deployed for SCDF Operation Lionheart mission to Christchurch, New Zealand



Picture (Above): LTC Eric Chua at the send off for the Operation Lionheart mission to Khao Lak, Thailand

in 2011, where she personally witnessed the high morale and camaraderie between the SCDF and international rescuers despite the swelling despair that filled the earthquake-struck Christchurch. Apart from having to weave in and out of precariously shattered buildings in search of trapped victims, she was also greeted by random and sudden aftershocks following the massive earthquake. Unlike the picturesque New Zealand which we are all too familiar with, Christchurch then was a visual depiction of massive destructions and immense lifelessness.

One could say that reality has both sides to it and that is most reflective in the life of SCDF HADCs like LTC Eric Chua and MAJ Khaisarah.

While putting on the rugged looking and heavy duty firefighting gear gives them their sense of pride and identity as lifesavers, they are equally proud to don their ceremonial uniforms and the aiguillettes worn over their right shoulders when serving as HADCs at the Istana. As the right-hand men and women to the President of Singapore, LTC Eric Chua and MAJ Khaisarah have served many foreign dignitaries such as His Royal Highness Prince Haji-Al-Muhtadee Billah, Crown Prince and Senior Minister at the Prime Minister's Office of Brunei Darussalam, Dr Angela Merkel, Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and His Excellency Sir Anand Satyanand, the Governor-General of New Zealand.

Even though they meet dignitaries from around the world all the time, the most memorable duties for LTC Eric Chua and MAJ Khaisarah were the farewell moment to former President SR Nathan and Mrs Nathan, and the Inauguration of the 7<sup>th</sup> President of the Republic of Singapore, Mr Tony Tan Keng Yam.

For LTC Eric Chua and MAJ Khaisarah, while the world is their oyster, home is still where their hearts will always be. 🇸🇬



Picture (Above): LTC Eric Chua dressed in the SCDF No. 1 uniform. HADCs wear the aiguillette over their right shoulder.



Picture: Officers from the SCDF Fire Investigation Unit leverage the use of state-of-the-art equipment in detecting the origins and cause of fires

HAPPY BIRTHDAY,

**Fire Detectives**

  
SSG Effendy Bin Saadon  
Investigation Support Specialist  
Fire Investigation Unit



“I have your back and I know that there is definitely another looking after mine”, said a Fire Investigation Unit (FIU) officer as he and his colleagues don the Unit Patch for one another to signify the camaraderie in FIU and in marking its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations.

“Whether is it writing work plans and directives, training Fire Investigation Dogs, setting up the laboratory, conducting on-scene investigations, performing fire modelling and research, every bit of these adds up to make FIU what we are today”, said LTC Lim Beng Hui, Commander FIU.

The FIU was set up on 1 June 1995 to strategically anchor SCDF as the National Authority for Fire Investigation in Singapore. Commanded by then CPT Christopher Tan as the Chief Fire Investigation Officer during its nascent formative years, the capabilities of FIU grew quickly.

Over time, its officers’ proficiency levels were constantly reviewed and enhanced to ensure that it remains competent and professional.

Not only are the FIU pioneer officers certified by the prestigious National Association of Fire Investigators from the United States of America, it has also spread its wings to the international arena for benchmarking and training purposes.

Equipped with a Fire Investigation and Research Laboratory, the FIU also introduced the Post Fire Guide that consists of pertinent information that is helpful for those who were affected by fires that occurred in their premises to return to normalcy quickly.

In addition, FIU officers also conducted fire safety talks to encourage community self-help in fire prevention.

On 3 June 2015, the Fire Investigation Unit celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary to commemorate its two decades of operation in Singapore.

The event was graced by SAC Anwar Abdullah, Director Operations Department and attended by pioneer and present FIU officers and officers from the SCDF Fire Research Unit, K-9 Unit and the Fire Safety and Investigation Training Centre, all of which have very close working relationships with FIU. 🚒



**SCDF  
FASHION  
GURU LENDS A HAND IN  
'MAKE A NILA' PROGRAMME**

Picture: LCP Muhammad Nurhisham Bin Mohd Sharif

**When was the first time you realise that you have an interest in fashion?**

When I was in Primary One, my art teacher assigned the class a colouring assignment. It was a simple dress in which we have to fill the blank spaces with colours. Instead of filling it with different colours like what the rest of my classmates did, I found myself designing the blank spaces instead. I started to draw different coloured patterns on it as I found the dress too plain. My teacher was so impressed that she gave me the highest score.

It was not until when I was 16 years old did I actually pursued my interest in fashion.

On a more personal note, my grandmother had always been a role model to me. She was a seamstress all her life and I have always been aspired to follow her footsteps. I wanted to carry on this tradition in my family and that convinced me to take up a Nitec course in Fashion Apparel and Production Design at the Institute of Technical Education College Central.

**Have you made any fashion pieces so far?**

Of course! I love making fashion pieces and I make it a point to infuse a tinge of tradition into my designs. My ancestors were from Indonesia and I love to bring in elements of Indonesian batik to my fashion pieces. Indonesian batik has a rich history of originality and acculturation. The diverse patterns found in the varied designs of Indonesian batik are mostly influenced by the evolution of techniques and workmanship over the centuries. The more I look at different batik pieces, the more I fall in love with them.

I have hand-sewn several fashion pieces using unique batik patterned fabrics.

**How did you come to know about the 'Make a Nila' Programme?**

I was mingling around with my officers and fellow Full-Time National Servicemen at a Public Affairs Department gathering when LTC Tan Jee Piau approached me to tell me more about the 'Make a Nila' Programme. The 'Make a Nila' Programme was an initiative by the Singapore South-East Asian Games Organising Committee (SingSOC) to encourage community involvement in the 2015 SEA Games that was hosted by Singapore. This programme encouraged members of the public to sew and design personalised stuffed figurines for the official mascot, Nila.

When I first heard of it, I was very excited and all I wanted to do was to take part in it. Since I am currently serving my Full-Time National Service (NS) with the SCDF, I was determined to sew mini replicas of the SCDF uniforms for the mascot. I also saw it as an opportunity for me to utilise my talent in fashion to make my NS journey a memorable one.

**How did you go about doing it?**

To be honest, it was not an easy task at all as there was a dateline to meet. I spent a few days thinking about the design and the type of fabric that I should use. I had no intentions in making it look like a commercialised product or any stuffed toy that you would usually see on display on the malls.

Instead, I wanted it to be something unique with a personalised touch for myself and the SCDF.

For every project that I did, I have always used recycled materials from old scrap fabrics or clothing that can no longer be worn and gave them a new life. I recycled my personal set of SCDF uniform, one in which I had accidentally burnt while ironing it last year.

I would say that the most challenging aspect of this project would be the sewing of the paramedic 'Star of Life' and the Gold IPPT badges. As the stuffed toy is very small, I had to hand-sew the tiny badges instead of simply using original badges. The proportions had to be precise and just right. In creating the luminous stripes that you can typically spot on the bunker gears of our firefighters, I used the ink found from some yellow highlighters to act as dye existing fabrics that I already had.

Oh. I also had to make provision for a hole in the pants that I sewed. That was meant specifically for the Nila's tail!

I spent about two weeks to complete both fashion pieces. I must say that I am very satisfied with the finished product and so were my colleagues and even my superiors.

**It takes a lot of patience to put together a fashion piece, doesn't it?**

Well, you are right but there is more to it. Apart from being patient, it is also important to be very diligent, meticulous and of course, creative. It is my personal mantra to never find ways to cut corners to a piece of artwork. Yes, my fashion pieces are my artworks!

Now in terms of finding my creative inspirations for my fashion pieces, that comes from being observant and through life experiences. For example, I started working at a tender age of 14 years old at a fast food restaurant. Hmm...I used to imagine myself revamping the designs of the staff uniform which the fast food restaurant made us wear. Haha!

**Since we just had the Singapore Fashion Week, do you fancy the work of any designer?**

Well, the world is right now in love with Victoria Beckham!!! I also fancy Asia's online fashion label, Love Bonito but most importantly, I support local designer brands. 🚗



***SCDF***  
The Life Saving Force