

Dr Ng lauds defence tech warriors for keeping S'pore secure

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Kok Xing Hui

Despite living on a small island, Singaporeans feel safe because of a "secret weapon" – the Defence Technology Community (DTC), Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said yesterday.

"Our warriors in defence technology have made up for these inherent shortcomings to help build an SAF (Singapore Armed Forces) that is capable of keeping us safe and secure," he told a dinner celebrating the community's 50th anniversary at Marina Bay Sands last night.

The DTC is a 5,000-strong community made up of the Defence Science and Technology Agency, DSO National Laboratories, Centre for Strategic Infocomm Technologies, and the logistics set-up of the SAF.

In his speech, Dr Ng recounted how the SAF and the DTC were conceived at a time when Singapore's per capita gross domestic product was about US\$700 – "equivalent to that of Sierra Leone and Rwanda today". Education standards were also low with only 54 per cent passing the Primary School Leaving Examinations.

Dr Ng likened the quest to build to a tri-service SAF within a decade to climbing Mount Everest.

Yet, Singapore is now "regarded

as having capabilities on a par with developed countries".

Singapore's defence scientists and engineers have worked with counterparts in the United States, Germany and France on fighter planes, battle tanks and unmanned mine countermeasure vessels.

"We are now expanding capabilities in the cyber and intelligence domains. We are on target to be the first navy in the world to have a fully unmanned mine hunting and clearance unit," said Dr Ng.

Yesterday, the DTC celebrated turning 50 with a commemorative book series titled Engineering Singapore's Defence – The Early Years. The book series was launched by President Tony Tan Keng Yam and it documents the development of Singapore's defence capabilities from its early days.

While no one can be sure what threats Singapore may face in future, Dr Ng said: "If we continue to display tenacity amid despair, courage in the face of intimidation and resolve when difficulties loom large, I believe that Singapore will prevail and that the SAF, fully supported by the DTC, will keep Singapore safe and secure for many generations to come."

kxinghui@sph.com.sg