

**57TH WAR MEMORIAL SERVICE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND
TOTAL DEFENCE DAY COMMEMORATION 2024
SPEECH BY SCCCI PRESIDENT KHO CHOON KENG
15 FEBRUARY 2024
WAR MEMORIAL PARK ALONG BEACH ROAD**

Mr Chan Chun Sing, Minister for Education,
Your Excellencies,
SAF Representatives, Religious Leaders,
Teachers and Students, Distinguished Guests,

Good morning everyone.

1. On behalf of the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI), I thank everyone for attending this War Memorial Service today. Every year without fail on the 15th of February, SCCCI gathers here to honour and remember the civilians who passed away during the Japanese Occupation in Singapore. At the same time, Singapore commemorates Total Defence Day through a series of activities, reminding Singaporeans on the importance of strengthening national defence and preparing for crisis.
2. It is of great significance to commemorate the war. Besides sharing the pain with the families of the civilian victims, we also deeply understand the price paid for the peace that we have today as well as what it means by “One generation plants the trees under whose shade another generation enjoys”. Our country’s sovereignty, prosperity and stability are built on the foundation of our forefathers’ sacrifices and hard work, which we must treasure, honour and be ever more grateful.
3. I would like to thank the students and teachers from the 16 secondary and primary schools for joining us today as we learn about history and its lesson. In the future, all of you will also contribute towards building Singapore’s defence capabilities, multi-racial harmony, social unity and resilient economy.

4. Today also marks 40 years of Total Defence. Singapore's first islandwide Total Defence exercise "Exercise SG Ready" will simulate cyber attacks, disinformation campaigns, disruptions to power and water as well as internet outages to increase Singaporeans' readiness for crises. This exercise is a highly important and significant example of "preparing for crisis". I urge all enterprises to actively increase our readiness and make plans for business sustainability.
5. Escalating geopolitical tensions with the Russia-Ukraine war, Israel-Palestinian conflict and Red Sea shipping crisis have exacerbated global tensions and trade protectionism. As a small island state, our economy and people's livelihood are highly dependent on international trade. Besides economic development, Singapore also needs to strengthen economic resilience and social unity, especially in ensuring sufficient food and energy supply.
6. To build a more resilient industrial chain and supply chain, SCCC will work even more closely with the Government and business community to forge closer friendships and trade partnerships with countries in Asia and ASEAN. This includes facilitating collaboration between enterprises from different countries as well as promoting dispute resolution to maintain healthy multilateral relations. At the same time, we also encourage Singapore businesses and employers to continue supporting their male employees to serve their National Service and attend their in-camp training which are crucial for national defence.
7. In closing, I express my deepest condolences and sympathies to the civilian victims and their families. To all Singaporeans, let us be even more united and work harder to defend the solidarity, peace and prosperity that we have now. Thank you.
