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MEDIA RELEASE

OVER 250,000 SALUTES FROM THE COMMUNITY TO SHOW APPRECIATION FOR PAST AND PRESENT NATIONAL SERVICEMEN

SAFRA's ground-up initiative to rally Singaporeans to show their appreciation for past and present national servicemen through the simple gesture of a salute has received tremendous support from the community. Over 250,000 salutes have been collected in photos and videos since the campaign was launched earlier in June in commemoration of 50 Years of National Service (NS50), a five-fold increase from the initial target of 50,000 salutes.

This was announced by Senior Minister of State for Defence and Deputy President of SAFRA, Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, at the 14th SAFRA Awards and 45th Anniversary Dinner held at SAFRA Mount Faber this evening, where 146 volunteers and 10 corporate partners were lauded for their unwavering support and significant contributions to SAFRA. Defence Minister and Chairman, SAFRA Board of Governors, Dr Ng Eng Hen graced the event as Guest-of-Honour and presented awards to the recipients of the Meritorious Awards.

Over the past four months, family members of national servicemen, even those residing overseas for work or study, have sent their salutes to show their appreciation for national servicemen back home. Over 400 businesses, schools and grassroots organisations have also supported the 'We Salute Our NSmen' campaign, rallying their employees and students to participate in group salutes. Several shopping malls have also offered their premises to place interactive photo kiosks to promote the initiative.

The outpouring of heart-felt responses shows the strong support and appreciation of the community for past and present national servicemen for their service to the nation. The campaign will continue till end of this year and members of the public are encouraged to continue sharing their salute photos or videos on social media with their words of appreciation to national servicemen, as well as the campaign hashtags #NS50salute and #SAFRAsg.

Strengthening SAFRA's relevance to NSmen

SAFRA's membership base has grown to over 600,000 this year, boosted by the 1-year complimentary membership offered to all Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) national servicemen who are serving, or have served National Service, as part of the NS50 Recognition Package. Over 480,000, or about 70 percent of the eligible population, have already received or registered for their complimentary SAFRA membership. The strong response is a reflection of SAFRA's continued relevance and value towards NSmen's lifestyle needs.

Over the past 45 years, SAFRA has grown its suite of offerings to meet the changing needs of NSmen and their families. Its six clubs island-wide, with a wide variety of quality facilities for family time, fitness and leisure, attract an average of over 8.6 million visitors annually.

Its unique indoor water playground at SAFRA Punggol, Splash @ Kidz Amaze, was named the Best in Category for playgrounds in the Landscape Industry Association of Singapore Awards of Excellence 2017. SAFRA's EnergyOne also clinched the Fitness Best Ovation Award as Gym of the Year against other gyms in the region in the Fitness Best Asia Awards 2017. Responding to the growing need for child care services among NSmen, every SAFRA club today also has a NurtureStars Preschool jointly managed by SAFRA and Kinderland Educare Pte Ltd.

In the coming years, SAFRA's seventh club in Chua Chu Kang will be ready, with unique facilities such as a sheltered swimming pool, a skypark running circuit, a nature-themed Kidz Amaze playground and an EnergyOne gym that also leverages on the amenities of the surrounding Chua Chu Kang Park for fitness programmes. Themed as a 'Fitness Oasis', the new club will also house a comprehensive suite of other facilities for fitness, recreation and F&B.

SAFRA's activities also engage over 850,000 NSmen, their family members and the public each year to strengthen bonds among NSmen and provide a deeper understanding of NS among their families.

Recognising the spirit of volunteerism

A total of 167 awards were presented to a record number of 156 recipients at this year's SAFRA Awards, with some receiving more than one category of awards. The Outstanding New Volunteer Award, which was first introduced at the last edition of the SAFRA Awards, saw a slight increase in the number of recipients who are young and new volunteers.

COL (NS) Peter Lam Charn Wye, Chairman of the SAFRA Volunteer Management Committee and the event's organising committee, commented: "Our volunteers are an important driving force and contribute significantly in varied aspects of the work of SAFRA, National Service Resort & Country Club, as well as So Drama! Entertainment. They come from diverse backgrounds and areas of expertise, but each give their time and dedication to make a difference in the lives of NSmen and their families. Many have served for decades and in various capacities, contributing to the transformation of SAFRA over the years, as a club for NSmen, by NSmen. New volunteers also join us regularly, providing new insights and creativity. The collective knowledge and ideas shared by our volunteers enriches the SAFRA experience, enabling us to better connect and meet the changing needs of NSmen with relevant, innovative and quality offerings."

More than 300 volunteers serve on various committees and interest groups across SAFRA, National Service Resort and Country Club (NSRCC) and So Drama! Entertainment. Since the SAFRA Awards was introduced in 1987, over 1,000 awards have been given out.

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About SAFRA National Service Association

SAFRA was formed in 1972 to provide for the social and recreational needs of national servicemen and their families through quality sports, social, educational and cultural programmes to recognise national servicemen for their contributions to national defence. SAFRA currently has a network of six clubs conveniently located in Jurong, Mount Faber, Punggol, Tampines, Toa Payoh and Yishun. Complementing the modern facilities at SAFRA clubs are a host of quality membership benefits and activities specially packaged for over 600,000 members and their families.

Issued by SAFRA National Service Association on 12 October 2017

SPEECH BY SENIOR MINISTER OF STATE FOR DEFENCE AND DEPUTY PRESIDENT OF SAFRA BOARD OF GOVERNORS, DR MOHAMAD MALIKI BIN OSMAN, AT THE 14TH SAFRA AWARDS AND 45TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION DINNER, ON 12 OCTOBER 17, 1900HRS, AT SAFRA MOUNT FABER

Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Defence and Chairman of SAFRA Board of Governors,
NSmen and volunteers,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

A Very Good evening,

1. This is a very special year as we mark two significant milestones. We commemorate 50 Years of National Service (NS50) as a nation, and SAFRA also celebrates its 45th Anniversary.
2. Over the years, Singapore has enjoyed relative peace and stability. These conditions allowed our economy to flourish and our society to prosper. Our resolve 50 years ago to introduce NS for every Singaporean son to build a strong Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) had paved the way for Singapore's success.
3. Today, we have a modern and integrated SAF with leading-edge capabilities to protect our interests on land, in the air, and at sea. Our soldiers go through realistic and tough training. They can rely on an advanced and networked combat system to fight more effectively, and strike more precisely. With the growing threat of terrorism in recent years, the SAF has also strengthened its partnership with other national agencies and foreign counterparts to detect potential ploys faster.
4. Operationally-ready national servicemen are playing a bigger role today in Singapore's homeland security. Given the attacks we have observed around the world and in the region, we must assume that attacks that could occur in Singapore may increase in scale, frequency and impact. Should there be multiple terrorist attacks, for example, homeland security capabilities by the SAF may be required. The Island Defence Training Institute was opened in July this year to train national servicemen to conduct joint operations with the Home Team. We expect to train 18,000 national servicemen each year.

5. To have an effective SAF, our soldiers must be fully dedicated to their NS duties and responsibilities, not just obligation. They must maintain a high level of combat readiness, ever ready when called upon. Our national servicemen play many different roles – they are sons, spouses, fathers, or colleagues in the workplace. Each sacrifices their time with their families and puts aside other commitments to defend their loved ones and all Singaporeans when they return for In-Camp Training. Having strong support from their families and the community are essential for our national servicemen to have the peace of mind and fortitude to perform their duties diligently, and serve with distinction.

6. This was one of the key reasons SAFRA was formed in 1972, as a way to appreciate NSmen for their contributions. Keeping to its mission, SAFRA has grown over the past 45 years to meet the needs of national servicemen and their families. From a temporary clubhouse at Prince Edward Lane serving less than 2,000 members during the year of its inception, SAFRA has since expanded to six full-fledged clubs island-wide, serving over 600,000 members today.

7. Its range of facilities has also evolved with changing needs. Responding to the growing need for child care services by NSmen starting their own families, every SAFRA club now has a NurtureStars Preschool centre jointly managed with Kinderland Educare Services Pte Ltd. There is also no shortage of quality facilities for family time, fitness and leisure. For instance, Splash @ Kidz Amaze, the unique indoor water playground at SAFRA Punggol, was named the Best in Category for playgrounds in the Landscape Industry Association of Singapore Awards of Excellence 2017. SAFRA's EnergyOne also clinched the Fitness Best Ovation Award as Gym of the Year against others in Asia. Overall, SAFRA clubs continue to be well-utilised with a total annual visitation of over 8.6 million. In the coming years, NSmen and their families can also look forward to more unique facilities when SAFRA builds its seventh club in Chua Chu Kang.

8. Complementing its facilities, SAFRA's activities also engage over 850,000 NSmen, their family members and the public each year. These activities help to strengthen bonds among NSmen and provide a deeper understanding of NS among their families. Those who participated in SAFRA club open houses, Sprint Kids Xtreme or the SAFRA Singapore Bay Run & Army Half Marathon this year, got to experience packing field packs and navigating challenges inspired by the SAF's Standard Obstacle Course. All these created opportunities for NSmen to share about their NS experiences with their families – the tough training they go through, and why they endure it. And our NSmen appreciate these opportunities. The realisation that they serve to defend their loved ones brings the whole family closer together with a deeper sense of shared conviction on the importance of our NSmen's service to the nation.

9. Beyond these, SAFRA's commitment to appreciate national servicemen also extends far and wide into the community to rally support. Through collaborations with businesses and organisations, national servicemen have been able to benefit from special privileges at up to over 3,000 partnering merchant outlets island-wide through SAFRA's membership. They can enjoy discounts on daily necessities, when they take their family out for a meal, or when they meet up with their NS buddies for recreation. Many of these businesses that collaborate with SAFRA to appreciate national servicemen have also been doing so for years, such as Caltex and Shaw Theatres, which offer SAFRA members special discounts on fuel purchases and movie tickets respectively, both of which are very popular among our members. And we encourage more businesses to come forward to explore long-term partnerships with SAFRA for the benefit of our national servicemen.

10. This year, when we introduced the NS50 Recognition Package to thank all past and present national servicemen, many of SAFRA's partners readily gave their support to extend the usage of the NS50 vouchers. As part of the package, a year of complimentary SAFRA membership is also extended to all SAF national servicemen who are serving, or have served Operationally Ready National Service, to enable them to enjoy SAFRA's wide range of club facilities and membership privileges. The response has been very strong, with over 480,000, or about 70 percent of the eligible population, having already received or registered for their complimentary SAFRA membership. This is a clear indication of SAFRA's continued relevance and value towards meeting NSmen's lifestyle needs.

11. To commemorate NS50, SAFRA also started a bold ground-up initiative to rally the community to show their appreciation for past and present national servicemen through the simple gesture of a salute. The 'We Salute Our NSmen' campaign was launched in June and within a short span of four months, over 250,000 salutes have been collected in photos and videos, with many more shared on social media. The support from businesses, schools, grassroots organisations and families has been tremendous. Several shopping malls proactively came forward to offer their premises to promote this initiative. Organisations and schools rallied their employees and students to participate in group salutes. Even Singaporeans residing overseas for work or study sent their salutes to our national servicemen back at home. Their heart-warming responses show the strong support of the community and we must continue to encourage and reinforce it .

12. More important than the number of salutes collected is the impact of this initiative in further strengthening the societal culture of showing appreciation for our national servicemen. This should go beyond one campaign to permeate our daily lives, in actions and words.

13. The volunteers and the corporate partners of SAFRA have done well also in this respect, through their unwavering support and significant contributions to SAFRA's development and various initiatives for the benefit of national servicemen. It is therefore befitting that as we celebrate SAFRA's 45th Anniversary, we also take this opportunity to thank all our corporate partners, and volunteers for making SAFRA what it is today.

14. More than 300 volunteers serve on various committees and interest groups across SAFRA, National Service Resort and Country Club (NSRCC) and So Drama! Entertainment. Many of these volunteers are NSmen who come from different walks of life and they serve well beyond their call of duty. We also have some ladies who have stepped up to volunteer. They serve in different areas, but they are united by a common purpose of serving the NS community.

15. We have volunteers who have contributed their leadership skills and experience to the success of national level initiatives and events, such as BG (NS) Tung Yui Fai, BG (NS) Winston Toh Bee Chew and Mr Teo Eng Dih. We also have volunteers who contributed to the management and development of SAFRA clubs and facilities, such as COL (NS) William Chua Eng Wah, MAJ (NS) Terence Quek Chun Hou, SLTC (NS) Laurence Goh Eng Yau, SLTC (NS) Ace Low Kian Ngian, LTC (NS) Ridzuan Bin Ismail, MAJ (NS) Chow Cheok Kai, MAJ (NS) Andy Tan Heok, CPT (NS) Azman Hisham Jaafar and LTC (NS) Tan Tze Hian, LTC (RET) Ho Lye Sum, COL (NS) Eugene Lam Toa-Yee, MAJ (NS) Khoo Sze Boon, 1WO (NS) Leng Chiak Sun and Mr Hoong Bee Lok. Other volunteers contribute their professional expertise in areas such as investment, audit, legal services, branding and communications, and education, such as Mr Yoong Ee Chuan, LTC (NS) Chiang Siew Kay, Mr Wong Teck Khim, Mr Yuen Ka Wei, COL (NS) Tin It Phong, CPT (NS) Ericz Ezekiel Tay, Mr Ang Choo Wee and Ms Lim Mei Mei. We also have volunteers who follow their passion in various lifestyle interests to engage other like-minded NSmen and their families, such as Mr Lester Koh Meng Hua, 3SG (NS) Jeremy Khoo Ghee Whatt, Mr Alvin Quek Chee Tiong and SGT (NS) Jay Teo. I am also heartened to note that many volunteers have served with dedication for up to 45 years, such as Mr Yip Hoi Kee, Mr Eric Goh Wee Seng, Mr Richard Koh Tian Poh, Mr Steven Seah Seow Kang and Mr Bernard Teo Tiat How. Each year, our volunteers put in a total of over 36,000 hours of their time in service of NSmen and their families.

16. I am very glad that we are honouring 146 volunteers and 10 corporate partners today. Not forgetting, also joining us this evening is former President of SAFRA, Associate Professor Koo Tsai Kee. All of them have also contributed significantly to SAFRA's progress over the years. All your contributions go a long way in making a difference in the lives of NSmen and their families.

17. SAFRA has done well over the last 45 years, but they are not contented to just celebrate their achievements. NSmen have varied lifestyle needs, aspirations and preference, and all these will continue to change over time. Today, they also have many more recreational choices available to them beyond SAFRA, ranging from integrated facilities to various innovative and niche activities. SAFRA has to constantly evolve and reinvent itself to stay relevant and be at the forefront of meeting NSmen's needs as their preferred lifestyle club.

18. As SAFRA welcomes new members in this NS50 year, it will strive to provide more bonding opportunities and further strengthen its partnerships to bring more value to members. In the coming years, SAFRA is also looking at transforming its clubs into 'smart clubs' by leveraging technology to make it more convenient for members to use its facilities and access information and processes online. There is much that NSmen and their families can look forward to.

19. Let me conclude by congratulating SAFRA on this special anniversary for 45 years of strengthening bonds and appreciating NSmen. I would also like to congratulate all the award recipients this evening and thank you for your invaluable contributions to the lives of our national servicemen. With your continued support, SAFRA, NSRCC and So Drama! Entertainment will grow from strength to strength in the years ahead.

20. Thank you.

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