

**56TH WAR MEMORIAL SERVICE IN COMMEMORATION OF THE
CIVILIAN VICTIMS OF THE JAPANESE OCCUPATION AND
TOTAL DEFENCE DAY COMMEMORATION 2023**

SPEECH BY SCCCI PRESIDENT KHO CHOON KENG

15 FEBRUARY 2023

WAR MEMORIAL PARK ALONG BEACH ROAD

Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Second
Minister for Law,

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests,

Good morning everyone.

1. Since the Civilian War Memorial was completed in 1967, the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce & Industry (SCCCI) has dedicated itself to holding the War Memorial Service every year without fail on the 15th of February, to honour and remember the civilians who passed away during the Japanese Occupation in Singapore.
2. Even though World War II was years ago, it continues to weigh heavily on those who went through it. This War Memorial Day is of great importance and special significance to Singapore and Singaporeans.
3. Firstly, this War Memorial Day allows Singaporeans to reflect on World War II and treasure what we have even more, raising the younger generation's awareness on the importance of strengthening national defence and preparing for crisis, to prevent history from repeating itself. Therefore, we are launching the Special Exhibition "Reflecting Upon the Past, Moving Forward as One" at the SCCCI Building today, with a National Education Talk for 240 secondary and primary school students to learn about the

story behind the Civilian War Memorial and understand SCCCI's efforts in spearheading its construction.

4. Secondly, commemorating the war teaches us to be grateful. As we pay our respects in front of the Civilian War Memorial, we gain a deeper understanding of the price that was paid for the peace we have today. From our forefathers and martyrs to the Singapore Armed Forces, Singapore Police Force, Singapore Civil Defence Force and frontliners who protect our lives, we express our utmost respect to them. We also sincerely thank our forefathers for their selfless dedication to build Singapore's defence capabilities and a society of racial harmony and mutual trust. These have formed the firm foundation for Singapore's sustainable stability and prosperity.
5. The Russia-Ukraine war which started last year is one of the biggest military conflicts since World War II. It has aggravated distrust between countries and given rise to economic decoupling, threatening economic globalisation and disrupting the global supply chain of which Singapore is a node, contributing to inflationary pressures.
6. As a small island state, Singapore lacks natural resources – be it trade or the people's livelihood, our economy cannot be fully self-sufficient. Therefore, Economic Defence is one of the six pillars of Total Defence.
7. To enhance economic resilience, SCCCI looks forward to drive the local business community to forge economic relations and friendship with the neighbouring countries in ASEAN. While ensuring an interconnected regional economy and sufficient supplies for the people, countries also need to strengthen mutual trust and support as we stay united to navigate global uncertainties.
8. SCCCI remains committed to fully support the Government and the people to boost Singapore's economy, interconnectedness and agility especially for rainy days. SCCCI also encourages businesses and employers to continue supporting National Service and the strengthening of national defence.

9. In closing, I express my deepest condolences and sympathies to the civilian victims and their families. I also urge Singaporeans to be even more united and work harder to defend the peace and freedom that did not come easy. May we never see war and darkness again.

Thank you.
