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Speech by Senior Minister of State for Defence Dr Mohamad Maliki Bin Osman, at the Launcing Ceremony of the Fourth Littoral Mission Vessel

A very good morning. My wife and I are indeed very honoured to be here today to launch the fourth Littoral Mission Vessel (LMV), *Justice*.

This is a very special year for the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN). The RSN turns 50 in May, and it has come a long way since its humble beginnings. Starting out as a small force with two wooden vessels, the RSN today has undergone a remarkable transformation into a full-spectrum and highly capable naval force, with the LMV as her latest addition.

What we have achieved today would not have been possible without the hard work, dedication and sacrifice of our pioneers. They have laid the strong foundations for the RSN of today. I am delighted to see our Navy pioneers here with us today. Amongst them are MAJ(Ret) Wong Loke Kiang, the first Commanding Officer of the Patrol Craft RSS *Justice*, and we also have LTC(Ret) Ong Eng Kok, the first Commanding Officer of the Patrol Vessel RSS *Justice*. I would like to thank you for your service and contributions to Singapore and the RSN.

Strong Foundations Built Over First 50 Years

Justice is a value that is inseparably tied to our nationhood and our shared values as Singaporeans. Our founding fathers took care to enshrine justice in the Proclamation of Singapore as the foundation of our democratic nation. The name *Justice* is also closely connected with the RSN's formative years. RSS *Justice* was one of the six new Patrol Craft (PC) delivered to the RSN in the 1970s. These ships formed the backbone of our fledging Navy: modern for their time, equipped with large-calibre naval guns, electronic consoles and capable of speeds faster than 30 knots. In many ways, these PCs represented the Navy's growing ambition as a professional force. Through gruelling training and patrols, our PC crews picked up the seafaring expertise needed to safeguard Singapore's maritime borders from seaborne threats and protect the vital shipping routes upon which Singapore's economy depends. Operation Thunderstorm was a defining operational experience for our Navy, as our PC crew were called upon to manage the mammoth task of providing the "boat people" with food and fuel, as well as repairing their vessels before sending them on their way. The ships and crews of our young Navy were stretched and challenged, but our Navy pioneers prevailed with their professionalism, dedication and resilience.

In the 1990s, our Navy replaced its PCs with the 55m Patrol Vessels. These Patrol Vessels were the first warships that were designed and constructed indigenously by our local defence industry, led by ST Engineering. Once again, *Justice* served on the frontline alongside with other PVs to keep Singapore's waters and sea lanes safe.

Ready To Embark On Next 50 Years

As the RSN celebrates its Golden Jubilee and proudly looks back at its achievements for the past 50 years, I know the RSN is also looking ahead to the next 50 years to ensure that she stays relevant and ready for the challenges ahead. Indeed, the maritime domain has become more complex and volatile, with transnational threats such as piracy, terrorism and trafficking. Tensions over contested regional waters have also come into sharp focus more recently. These, coupled with the fact that the Singapore Strait is a vital artery for commercial shipping and our economic livelihood, means that there is much more at stake.

The LMV is a good illustration of how the RSN is looking ahead. Working closely with Defence Science & Technology Agency (DSTA) and ST Engineering, the RSN has designed the LMV to conduct a wider range of operations in a more complex environment. It will give the RSN greater mission flexibility and sustainability. Our new LMVs can be equipped with different mission modules with the capabilities necessary to support a wide range of operations - from securing our maritime borders to Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions farther afield.

The RSN has also leveraged technology and adopted novel operating concepts to realise a lean manning for the LMVs, which require a crew of 23 sailors - no mean feat for an 80 metre-long warship. In many established navies, a warship of this size will have more than twice the number of personnel to operate. This reflects the calibre of the sailors that we need and have, but also allows the RSN to preempt manpower shortfalls due to low birth rates, which confront us in

the near future.

Technological innovations can take us far, but, to go higher and distinguish ourselves, we rely on the crew of men and women to ensure that our LMVs punch above their weight. Over the RSN's 50 year history, our sailors have embodied the Navy Spirit - combining their professionalism with a can-do attitude, and supporting one another in a tightly knit Navy Family. So, I have every confidence that the pioneer crew of LMV *Justice* will dedicate themselves to their mission with passion, and continue the fine legacy of our pioneers.

To the Commanding Officer and crew of LMV *Justice*: our national pledge embodies our collective aim as Singaporeans to build a democratic society, based on justice and equality. As the pioneer crew of the LMV *Justice*, I entrust to you the honourable duty of living up to the name your ship bears, as you carry out your duties to ensure Singapore's seaward defence and maritime security.

It leaves me now to congratulate the RSN, DSTA and ST Engineering for today's milestone in our LMV journey. You have pushed the boundaries of innovation and delivered a new warship that is smarter, faster and sharper. To borrow a naval phrase - *Bravo Zulu* - Well Done! I wish you all fair winds and following seas. Thank you.

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