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SPEECH BY ENCIK OTHMAN WOK, MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, AT
THE MISS SINGAPORE PRINCESS CONTEST CHARITY BALL HELD AT THE
CRYSTAL BALLROOM, HYATT HOTEL, ON 5 FEB 77 AT 8.15 PM

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Ladies and Gentlemen

1 This Charity Ball is being held to raise funds to improve medical facilities at the Home for the Aged in Upper Thomson Road run by the Little Sisters of the Poor. This is a commendable objective and the Apex Club of Tanglin deserves to be commended for organising this function.

2 Projected statistics from the 1970 Singapore census indicate that for the next decade at least, the number of old people will be increasing. Singapore residents 60 years old and above will number approximately 178,600 in 1985 compared with 142,200 in 1975. Not all of them will have the means to support themselves in their old age. A number who are now gainfully employed will probably be able to look forward to enjoying their retirement benefits but many being unemployed or in lowly paid occupations will have either no savings or CPF credit or insufficient amounts of these to ensure for themselves a comfortable life. These old folks will be looking to the community for support.

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3 We in Singapore owe an obligation to our aged. If it is true to say that Singapore has no natural resources but its hardworking people to rely on, then it would be no exaggeration to say that the old have worked hard to make it possible for the young to enjoy a better quality of life than they used to enjoy themselves. This is no doubt true considering the advances we have made in the standard of living in Singapore in the last few decades. It would therefore be highly ungrateful of us not to ensure that the needy old have adequate shelter and care. Those of us who have elderly relatives should make every effort to see to it that our old folks are properly looked after. We should not excuse ourselves of this responsibility by saying that the pressures of modern life make it impossible for us to share the same roof with our elders.

4 Of course, there will be some old folks who have no younger kinsfolk to care for them. Alternative solutions would have to be found for these old people. I would like to urge societies and clubs set up with charitable or mutual benefit objectives to consider the setting up of more Homes for the Aged close to the surrounding

community where the residents could keep in constant touch with people in other age groups. In this way the residents would not feel isolated or neglected.

5 Old age with its attendant illnesses can be a difficult phase of life. It would be true to say that old people require greater medical and nursing attention. The Little Sisters of the Poor are now gathering funds to improve the medical facilities at their Home for the Aged. I understand that the intention is to buy medical and physiotherapy equipment to supplement the care to the residents that is already being given by members of the Catholic Doctors Guild and other voluntary doctors. I commend the nuns of the Little Sisters of the Poor for their service towards the aged in Singapore. I hope that their example and the example of the Apex Club of Tanglin will be taken to heart by other Singaporeans.

Thank you.

