

PRESS RELEASE

Release No.: 02/OCT

04-1/97/10/02

97-AT-43

**SPEECH BY MR A.BDULLAH TARMUGI,
MINISTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT,
AT COMMUNITY CHEST AWARDS PRESENTATION CEREMONY
(GOLD, SILVER AND BRONZE AWARDS)
AT BALLROOM, ORIENTAL SINGAPORE
ON THURSDAY, 2 OCTOBER 1997 AT 3.00 PM**

It gives me great pleasure to be here this afternoon at this Awards Ceremony to give recognition to the donors and supporters of Community Chest.

I understand that there are 27 first-time award recipients. I welcome you to this Award Ceremony and applaud you for your achievement in getting your staff to participate in the SHARE and other programmes to support the Community Chest. I also recognise the names of many familiar organisations who have been at past award ceremonies. Your continued support of the Community Chest is most invaluable. It is with all your continued backing that this year, ComChest has met its target of raising \$37 million for its 50 charities and the 178,978 beneficiaries which it supports.

Your support is crucial and important. In a fast-paced society as ours, it is only too easy and comfortable to concentrate on our own concerns and to forget that there are others who are less fortunate and who are lagging

behind in the race of life. This is a fact which we should neither forget nor neglect as we prepare ourselves as a nation which cares.

Indeed, as we advance economically and become more affluent, we must continue to have the capacity for compassion for the less privileged amongst us. Otherwise, our country will be a cold, hard place where each person is worth only his economic contribution, rather than his value as an individual and caring member of the community.

As the country prepares for the 21st century, ComChest too, must take stock of its past achievements, and look into how it can play an expanded role in the voluntary sector in the new millennium. ComChest needs to face up to the possibility of a future when the number of voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) under its wing doubles. Already, ComChest needs to compete with other equally worthy concerns for the charity dollar. It will need to find more innovative ways to raise more money to meet the needs of its VWOs and to fund their programmes. I would like to offer two suggestions.

First, ComChest should continue to expand the SHARE programme further. Increasing the pool of donors is one way. ComChest has put much effort into this. There may also be other ways. For instance, some donors have been with you for over a decade, but the amount contributed may be largely unchanged. As we all know, a dollar pledged a decade ago is not equal to a dollar pledged today. ComChest could therefore review its existing donor base, to see if those who are already converted to your cause may wish to pledge a little more.

Secondly, many of SHARE's individual donors' contributions are being made through a deduction from their monthly salaries. This is the case

for the bulk of the Share donors from the public sector. With such a system, when a person leaves the organisation he works for, his contribution to ComChest is unfortunately also lost unless he/she makes the same commitment in the new place of work. However, even if a person leaves a job, I am sure that his commitment to ComChest does not change. ComChest needs to actively look into how to retain these donors, for example, by converting their donations to GIRO instead.

I am also happy that ComChest has worked to address the perception that a substantial amount of the monies it collects goes into administrative costs. This year, Singapore Pools has agreed to sponsor \$2 million for the National Council of Social Services (NCSS) to underwrite the administrative and operating expenditure of its fund raising arm, the Community Chest, thus ensuring that virtually all the funds raised from the public will now go directly to the 50 charities of NCSS. I applaud your efforts and also thank Singapore Pools for their generosity.

Last but not least, let me congratulate all the award recipients today for the hard work you have put in to attain the awards. I am certain that the charities and beneficiaries whom you have helped appreciate your kindness and contributions. I hope you have a nice day.

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