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# Singapore Government **PRESS RELEASE**

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**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT C V DEVAN NAIR AT THE MORNING  
RECEPTION FOR DONORS TO THE COMMUNITY CHEST AT THE ISTANA  
ON SATURDAY, 4 AUGUST 1984 AT 11.00 AM**

Singaporeans look back with legitimate pride on 25 years of achievement. But, however successful we are as a society, there will still be in our midst people less favoured by circumstance or fortune. In particular we will have to help the indigent, the aged, the handicapped, and the helpless victims of incapacitating accidents and maladies. Through some nasty quirk of fate, anyone of us could end up one day among the disadvantaged.

The Government is playing its part by providing subsidies and infrastructural support to various welfare institutions. But, as in all societies, Government efforts should be supplemented by community efforts. And the response for promoting the care and welfare of the less fortunate in society needs to be shared by all citizens, and not just by Government and the well-to-do. This is the rationale of the Community Chest of Singapore.

A concerted community effort on behalf of the Community Chest is well within the capacity of Singaporeans. An inspiring illustration is provided by the Muslim community, by the way in which practically all Muslims in Singapore have rallied round Mendaki to ensure that Muslim children are provided with every opportunity and encouragement to realise their educational potential.

The selfish, of course, take refuge in specious excuses. How often have we not heard the self-righteous plea: "Charity begins at home". Nothing wrong with this adage. But do not misread it. It says charity **BEGINS** at home. It **DOES NOT** say that charity should also **END** there.

The average Singaporean pays monthly subscriptions to his trade union, club, society or association. Why can we not pay a small regular monthly subscription to the Community Chest, for the welfare of disadvantaged Singaporeans of all races and religions. The equivalent of the price of two packets of cigarettes, or a couple of bottles of beer a month, will do. And if you manage to give up tobacco and alcohol, half of what you save thereby can be donated to the Community Chest.

One idea which you may consider would be to provide for individual, institutional and corporate membership in the Community Chest. Let each person pay what he or she can by way of a monthly subscription, either through payroll deduction or the POSB GIRO scheme. You will not even notice the packet of cigarettes or the bottle of beer you failed to buy.

The same goes for corporations. Golf clubs and the like provide for corporate members, and the corporations gaily cough up. They can, not with gaiety, but with a glow of sanctity, contribute what they can to the Community Chest.

There are some fund-raising techniques which I am not enthusiastic about. Some voluntary welfare organisations employ professional canvassers to raise funds by selling advertising space in local publications. Some 30 per cent to 40 per cent of the total funds raised go to the canvassers. But when members of the public give, they do so to support the charities, and not to fill the coffers of canvassers.

Uncoordinated fund-raising activities by voluntary welfare organisations can produce unintended consequences. The smaller or medium-sized charities will find it more difficult to mobilise funds to support and

extend their programmes, whereas the bigger and older organisations will have a greater advantage in raising more than their fair share of the funds required. But through the Community Chest a more equitable arrangement can be achieved as monies are distributed in accordance with actual needs.

When welfare organisations join the Community Chest, they share their resources, and therefore help each other to provide and develop services for the community. In the long run, everyone benefits, since both small and large welfare organisations will be able to continue providing useful services to people in need. And corporations can invest more time on running their businesses, without being pestered by numerous appeals for cash and goods, and more funds will be available for providing welfare services through reduced overhead costs in fund-raising.

For 1985, the Community Chest has to raise at least \$8 million to support 24 charities. To date, the Chest has raised only \$1 million. I am confident that the remaining \$7 million for 1985 will not pose an impossible challenge to the civic sense, and sense of community of individual citizens, Clan Associations, Chambers of Commerce, service clubs, foundations and corporations. The Community Chest must be filled up by the community. The Chest itself will be as large as determined by the generosity of the community.

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