

**SPEECH BY DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MR ONG TENG CHEONG,  
AT THE LAUNCH OF THE EURASIAN ASSOCIATION ENDOWMENT FUND  
AT THE MARINA MANDARIN HOTEL  
ON SUNDAY, 25 OCTOBER 1992 AT 7.30 PM**

Your President mentioned earlier that the total Eurasian community in Singapore numbers only 13,000. This is less than 0.5 per cent of Singapore's population. Although the Eurasian community is small, your contributions to the development of Singapore have certainly not been small. Eminent Eurasians have figured prominently in the history of Singapore, even before we gained independence in 1965. The Patron of your Association, Mr E. W. Barker, was himself a distinguished political figure and a Cabinet Minister for 24 years.

Many Singaporeans have the misconception that the Eurasian community are a privileged lot, believing that many are born with a silver spoon and that all Eurasian children do well in school. A few have therefore questioned the need for a community self-help group to assist needy Eurasians. They cannot reconcile with the fact that there are needy Eurasians, just as there are needy Malays and needy Indians and Chinese.

Every community, big or small, has its fair share of the needy and the weak. Because the Eurasian community is small, the problems of its members are often not as apparent as those of the other communities. But problems there are, and the problems will remain unless they are addressed. I am therefore delighted that your community has decided to come together to actively solve these problems.

I understand that one area of assistance the Association intends to undertake is organising tuition classes for the weaker students within your community. I must say that I was surprised when I learned that English had been identified as one of the subjects that some of your children are weak in.

I suppose that when we use a language while young, we often do not bother very much about grammar or correct usage. We tend to use a more colloquial style. So mistakes are reinforced through prolonged usage and become that much harder to correct later in school. This applies to all languages.

Your desire and decision to assist needy Eurasians reinforces the point that community-based self-help organisations are most effective in solving the problems of the community. A national-level self-help organisation catering to the needs of all races, as some Government critics have suggested, will not be sensitive enough to the special needs of the smaller communities. The problems of the smaller communities, under such a large organisation, may never be addressed effectively, or even brought up.

With no more than 7,000 working adults in your community, achieving the \$2 million target for your Endowment Fund will not be easy. I suggest that you do not restrict your activities to your own community. You should venture out. You should also tap on the resources of the other self-help groups such as SINDA (Singapore Indian Development Association) or CDAC (Chinese Development Assistance Council). Work closely with them to minimise costs wherever there are overlapping areas of interest.

The President of your Association announced earlier that the Government has granted tax-exemption for donations to the Endowment Fund. I am now happy to announce a further piece of good news. The Government has agreed to provide a dollar-for-dollar matching grant of up to \$1 million over five years for your Endowment Fund. Just as you care about those who need help in your community, the Government also cares. Government will match what you raise.

Finally, before I conclude, let me touch on a rather sensitive point. I know that many of you feel uncomfortable when grouped under the "Other Races" category. This often happens in Government surveys or reports covering the different races. But

take heart. These are only statistical groupings. It does not mean that if you are neither Chinese, Malay, nor Indian, you are second class. The statisticians may not think your numbers are significant, but the Government certainly do. You are not mere statistics. You are an essential part of Singapore. You are full-fledged, full-blooded Singaporeans.

Eurasian Singaporeans have the resources, the brain power and the resolve to tackle the problems of your community. I wish you every success in your efforts to uplift the Eurasian community in Singapore.

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Subject: [Launch of the Eurasian Association Endowment Fund]  
Posted: Thu 29-October-92 16:21 SING  
Delivered: Thu 29-October-92 16:21 SING (88 lines)  
Msg ID: IPM-8812-921029-147243270

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