

SINGAPORE GOVERNMENT PRESS RELEASE

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TEXT OF SPEECH BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND ACTING
MINISTER FOR SOCIAL AFFAIRS, DR. TOH CHIN CHYE, AT THE
ROCHORE CONSTITUENCY NATIONAL DAY DINNER AT THE KAMPUNG
KAPOR COMMUNITY CENTRE ON SATURDAY, AUG. 6, 1977 AT 3 P.M.

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The number of persons aged 60 years and over was 153,400 in 1976 or 6.7 per cent of the total population. Because of better medical care, their numbers will increase by 33,000 by 1985 and many will live into their seventies and eighties. Because of age they present medical problems. If they have no savings or other means of support they will become a social problem.

A significant proportion of aged persons will not have any Central Provident Fund contribution or if they have it will be small. During 1975, 10,018 withdrawals from the CPF were made. Of this number 5,468 or 54 per cent withdrew less than \$2,000 each. For 1976 there were 12,172 CPF withdrawals of which 46.6 per cent were less than \$2,000 each.

The problem of looking after the aged is the problem of the family and the community. Leaving the government alone to be responsible for the aged will not strengthen our society. I am glad that out of the 13 homes for the aged in Singapore, 12 are run by private organisations and one by the Social Welfare Department. Together they provide 1,735 beds but the Social Welfare Department has a current waiting list of 579 old persons to be admitted to these various homes. The Rochore Kongsu for the aged is the latest home to be set up and is receiving support from different age groups.

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In order to encourage more community participation in solving some of our social problems, the Minister for Finance has agreed that donations to homes for the aged and chronic sick be exempted from income tax. Homes for the aged will be registered with the Department of Social Welfare in order to ensure that the homes are properly managed and that the funds of the homes are not misused.

This year we celebrate our 12th National Day anniversary but Singapore can endure only if our society cultivates a sense of cohesion by teaching the young to live not only for today but also for tomorrow. It is the young, the middle-aged and the old who represent a continuous thread in any society. If the thread is broken we have a weak society. But if we strengthen the ties between the young, the middle-aged and the old, we also strengthen our conviction that there is continuity in Singapore's future and living and working has a purpose.

AUGUST 6, 1977.
