

Singapore Government

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SPEECH BY MR TEO CHONG TEE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (SOCIAL AFFAIRS), AT
THE SINGAPORE JAYCEES - CITY CHAPTER 33RD ANNIVERSARY DINNER AND DANCE
AT THE HILTON HOTEL BALLROOM ON FRIDAY, 7 MAY 82 AT 7.30 PM

It gives me great pleasure to be here tonight to join you in celebrating the 33rd Anniversary of the Singapore Jaycees - City Chapter.

The Jaycees is an international fraternity whose main purpose is to develop the individual's abilities and stimulate joint efforts by young men for the purpose of improving the economic, social and spiritual well-being of mankind. Its ultimate objective is to encourage and provide opportunities for the self development of youth through service to the community. I am pleased to note that the Singapore Jaycees, of which the City Chapter is a founder component, has lived up to this noble objective since its inception 33 years ago. Apart from the many leaders in the various sectors in our society whom it has helped to nurture, the Singapore Jaycees has embarked on a number of community service projects of lasting benefit to society. As early as 1950, it organised fund-raising projects in aid of Boys' Town, SATA, the Singapore Police Fund and the University of Singapore Library. When the most serious fire in Singapore broke out in Bukit Ho Swee in 1961, Jaycees initiated "operation stockpile" to assist the victims. In 1968, it spearheaded a campaign to instil a consciousness among the people to bring up healthy babies by sponsoring the National Baby Show organised by the People's Association. In 1972, it took the initiative to encourage excellence in youth by introducing an Outstanding Young Singaporean Award Scheme. Another project was the initiation of "Boys' Day in Business" from 1959 to 1971, to expose students of school-leaving age to one day of working life. The success of this project won the Singapore Jaycees the coveted USA Award for "The Most Outstanding Project in Youth Activities" at the Puerto Rico World Congress in 1961.

All these and many other projects are ample proof that the Jaycees are responsive to changing social needs. This is a quality which any civic organisation must possess if it is to remain relevant to the society in which it operates. I am pleased to note that one of your current major projects is to raise funds for the Chronic Sick Unit of the Woodbridge Hospital which serves the elderly sick. Priority is given in the Unit to chronic sick destitutes who need intensive nursing care and those who are suffering from terminal illnesses. Patients who recover after a process of medical rehabilitation are sent home to be reunited with their families. The Unit should not be looked upon as a place where children can deposit their aged sick parents and rid themselves of the responsibility of providing and caring for them.

The problem of the aged sick will be increasingly felt as our population ages. My Ministry is currently working closely with various voluntary organisations to meet the institutional and rehabilitative needs of the aged. In this connection, the Singapore Jaycees could take on the challenge of mounting a public education programme to reinforce the concept of family responsibility in regard to the care of the aged, the aged sick and the disabled.

Children must realise that they owe a debt of responsibility to their parents when they are no longer able to look after themselves and in turn need their care and affection. It would indeed be a shame for grown-up children who are in a position to discharge this responsibility to even attempt to pass on their responsibility to voluntary organisations or to the State. However, where the children are not in a position to discharge this responsibility or where the elderly persons really have nobody to turn to for support, it will be necessary to provide institutional care. Fortunately, with better provident fund schemes, better earning power of Singaporeans and greater company welfarism in the future, we can all look forward to growing old gracefully. Of course, the numerous day care centres, senior citizens' clubs, friendship and other recreational centres for senior citizens will only prove successful through active participation and usage by the elderly themselves.

On this note, I would like to commend your organisation for its past performances and wish you every success in the coming years.