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SPEECH BY MR TEO CHONG TEE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY (SOCIAL AFFAIRS)
AT THE STARS CELEBRITIES '82 DINNER, ORGANISED BY THE APEX CLUB OF
SINGAPORE (CITY), AT THE NEPTUNE THEATRE RESTAURANT
ON SATURDAY, 8 MAY '82 AT 7.30 PM

I am very pleased to be with you on the occasion of this charity variety show.

The Apex Clubs in Singapore have been very active in community services. They have proven over the last three to four years what small groups of professionals with a commitment to public welfare can do. They have also shown that, notwithstanding their onerous and multifarious work commitments in the office, professionals can find time to bring tangible relief to their fellow-beings, especially the underprivileged.

One of the significant contributions of the Apex Clubs is the launching of the Day Care Centre for the Elderly at Henderson as a pilot project in November '80 in co-operation with the Singapore Council of Social Service. This Centre provides rehabilitative services to elderly persons discharged from hospitals. It also gives opportunities for the ambulant and semi-ambulant elderly residents to participate in social and recreational activities. For the convenience of elderly persons, the Centre provides lunch and refreshments as well as transport facilities at cost to users, some of whom come from quite a distance.

The response from our senior citizens has been encouraging. Its success shows that day care centres for the elderly set up within HDB estates can be run on a viable non-profit-making basis and yet meet the needs of the residents. I do hope that Apex Clubs and other voluntary organisations would come forward to provide, say, another four or five similar centres at strategic locations to serve residents in the neighbourhood. This would reduce the need for travelling long distances. It would also be of tremendous help

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to working children to know that their aged parents are properly taken care of while they are at work.

On the whole, voluntary organisations and religious bodies collectively provide about 2,100 out of a total of 3,400 beds in various welfare Homes. This represents 60 per cent of the available bed space. The Government provides the remaining 40 per cent. With the available facilities, there should be no difficulty to accommodate all ambulant elderly persons who are destitute.

Since 1980, attention has been focussed on the emerging problem of the aged sick. Working couples are finding it increasingly difficult to provide adequate care to aged sick parents notwithstanding regular visits of nurses under the Home Nursing Foundation Scheme. Those who can afford, place their aged sick parents in private paying nursing Homes. The charges can be fairly high. The most expedient way of redressing this problem is for existing community Homes, temple Homes and other voluntary Homes to expand or convert some of their existing dormitories to take in a few aged sick persons. One advantage in a Home that combines the ambulant aged and a limited number of the aged sick is that the more capable aged can help look after and keep an eye on the aged sick.

Meanwhile, appeals to voluntary and religious organisations to set up welfare Homes for the aged sick have met with an encouraging response. My Ministry is now working out plans to assist the organisations to implement the projects. These include securing of sites, facilitating planning and building plans approval and tax exemptions and administrative advice. While voluntary organisations are looking into ways to provide more facilities for the aged sick, I hasten to reiterate that the primary responsibility for providing care for the aged and in the case of the aged sick, where one or more members of the family are in a position to provide the necessary care, should rest with the family with support from community-based services. The Government and charitable welfare organisations will continue to provide the necessary care for the destitute aged.

Finally, I would like to compliment the Apex Clubs for their fine effort in rendering a variety of services to the community. My special thanks also go to the stars who are participating in this charity variety show. I wish all of you an enjoyable evening.

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