

27 FEB 1985

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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85-767-2

Release No: 28/JAN
04-3/85/01/30

**SPEECH BY MR TEO CHONG TEE, PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY
(COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT), AT THE LAUNCHING OF THE "FAMILY
DIGEST" - A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY THE SINGAPORE WOMEN'S
ASSOCIATION - AT CRYSTAL BALLROOM, MING COURT HOTEL
ON WEDNESDAY, 30 JAN 1985 AT 7.15 PM**

The institution of the family is the basic social unit. Through the family, the individual is nurtured to take his appropriate place in society. The kind of society we desire depends very much on how the individual is brought up within the family. If members of the family are healthy and robust, have received education up to their full potential and are taught to be caring and helpful not only to themselves and their kins but to others as well, the society will progress and prosper. Conversely, a society will decline and disintegrate if its citizens are weak, ill-educated, selfish and unethical.

With rapid social changes brought about by urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation, the institution of the family now faces many trials, tribulations and challenges. Roles and status among family members are no longer clearly defined and strictly adhered to. For example, the man in the family is no longer the sole provider and supreme head. Not that I mourn the loss of man's absolute authority, I certainly welcome it as it shows progress and democracy. However, I am concerned as to how the changes in family roles and hierarchy are affecting the family and how we can preserve and strengthen the desirable virtues and value system in the family and society. As we advance and progress, the women's area of autonomy within the family gets expanded.

Some will challenge the institution of the family in various forms such as spurning marriage and family life or abandoning marriage when it does not provide the satisfaction they perceive.

With speedy communication, our traditional values and attitudes are very much exposed to the influence of other cultures. Our lifestyle changes in consequence. We develop higher expectations of life, which leads to endless pursuit for more material gains and creature comforts. There is a danger that in the rat race, we lose some of the desirable virtues such as warm interpersonal relationships, empathy for the less fortunate, filial piety and charity. While we must progress and adopt what is good for us, we must not lose sight of those time-honoured traditional values which unify the family and strengthen the social fabric.

The Singapore Women's Association should be congratulated for the timely publication of the "Family Digest" which aims to provide information on issues affecting the health of the family. Publications such as this can serve a useful function in fostering better relationship among family members and reinforcing desirable social values. The editors should target their readership at not only the highly educated, but the less educated as well. It is the latter who needs assistance and find such publications useful. To be really appreciated by them, the topics selected must be relevant to their needs and the presentation must be clear and easy to read.

I note that the Singapore Women's Association is active in initiating and innovating programmes for the young, middle-aged, old, disabled or the socially disadvantaged. I would like to commend their worthy efforts and also to see them continue to play an ever active role in the future.

On this note, I have the pleasure to launch the "Family Digest". Thank you.

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